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CHICAGO LEDGER

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BALANCING UP THE LEDGER

"HELLO," says the Lady with the Fan, peering coquettishly out from the torn cover of the Ledger for July 24. "It's a fine day and a whacking good magazine and the Great Mystery number is one week nearer and politics is booming, and on the whole it's not a bad world."

YOU can't really blame Bill for losing faith after you read his recital of woes. (Lead story.) Of course, he had sold the Fort Huron Hotel to a hick, and he had no idea who owned the hotel, either—but anybody as handsome as Bill (see page 3), in so elegant a pinchback suit—+ There! We've forgotten what we were going to say. We stopped to ask the Editor how to spell pinchback and after telling us he insulted our intelligence by saying, "They're out of style now, y' know." Does he suppose we don't read "What a Well-dressed Man Should Wear?"

Heart-Poem for the Week.

LITTLE WILLIE from the mirror
Sucked the mercury all off,
Thinking in his childish error
It would cure his whooping cough.

Willie's mother, at the funeral,
Remarked to Mrs. Brown:
"'Twas a chilly day for Willie
When the mercury went down!"

IF YOU were unfortunate enough to overlook the first installment of Eric Strongbow (see page 7) do not fail to begin it now with aid of the synopsis. It's a "different" story and it will transport you as on a magic carpet to the realms of the Niebelungen Lied. There are Princesses in it, too—Snowfrid, cold, stately, and handsome, with the dignity of a tall lily; and there is the Irish Princess, Eileen, lovely with the sparkle of vivaciousness—warm, tender, impulsive. Surely these are women worth reading about! And no one could find fault with the hero—only please remember when you scan his dashing portrait on page 7 that those horns belong to the helmet, not to Eric himself. There is a Scald in the story, who enters some exciting situations, for, of course, you would expect a Scald to be in hot water.

THERE is no use talking. In every installment of "Thin Ice" the congealed, transparent substance becomes frailer and we predict that somebody will get a good ducking some day. Serve 'em right, too, for expecting to linger on frozen spots in this weather. By the way, we are there in the picture of the fight on page 4, watching intently with a nervous expression on our face. Look us up—third from the right, wearing a derby.

The title of the story on page 3 is a whacking good title, there is no doubt of it, but if you are a bit puzzled as to its application, remember that Breathitt County, in Kentucky, is famous for its feuds, and that the indomitable spirit of Alvin typifies the very best "Blood of Breathitt."

The new Chancellor of Germany was born in New York. The President of the Irish Republic was born in New York. The boss of the Russian Bolshevists lived in New York. We complain of the trouble foreigners bring to America. We have exported some ourselves.

Before marriage a man has been known to declare himself unworthy of his sweetheart's love, and after marriage to spend about two-thirds of his time proving it.

If ghosts haunt churchyards they must get some joy from reading on their tombstones how good they were during life.

Some men expect St. Peter to pass them thru the pearly gates because they once paid 50 cents for a 15-cent supper at a church social.

No, indeed, Luke, no woman can lace herself as tight as man can drink himself.

If mistakes were crimes all men would be in jail.

Why does a man invariably move the chair when he sits down?

When doctors disagree the patient has a fighting chance for his life.

Some folks' self-admiration proves that there is no accounting for tastes.

How Authors Spend Their Time

IT IS commonly supposed that authors spend one-third of their life sleeping, one-third in eating and other forms of recreation, and one-third in authoring. The Editor of the Ledger, who was for many years an author, who still does a little authoring in his spare time, and who consorts, associates, quarrels, borrows money from, loans money to, accepts stuff from, rejects stuff of, is subjected to superiors who are, and is in charge over several subordinates who are trying to be

AUTHORS,

begs to explode this popular supposition. An author spends very little time in writing his stories. Ninety per cent of his time—unless he can secure an isolated "garret" on the fifteenth floor of a tenement building, as did the one described in a previous article—is spent in answering the following questions, asked by recently acquired acquaintances, enemies, friends, street car conductors, landlords and strangers. To-wit:

I.

Do you work all night and sleep all day, like the authors in the comic pictures?

II.

Do different kinds of diets make you turn out different kinds of stories?

III.

Are the people in your stories friends of yours that you actually know?

IV.

Does your light burning at night interfere with your wife's sleep?

V.

Can you read other fellers' stories with any enjoyment, when you see the wheels back of them?

VI.

Where do you get your stories?

VII.

Why is it your hair is short and you look business-like? We thought, etc.

VIII.

Do the Editors hire you to write the story, and then you write it?

IX.

Do you know how your story is going to turn out when you begin it?

X.

Why don't you write for the moving pictures instead of the magazines?

XI.

Have you got a studio down in Bohemia?

XII.

Have your stories actually happened?

XIII.

Did you read Johann Fedink's new book, "Asleep in the Blue?" NO! Why—why—I thought authors read everything, etc.

XIV.

How did you come to write your first story?

XV.

Where do you get your red wine, now that prohibition has come?

XVI.

How on earth do you keep in your mind where everybody is at the same minute in a story? (This to serial story writers.)

XVII.

Do Editors pay more than three or four dollars for a story?

XVIII.

My, you're lucky to make such easy money. Last week's paper told of a man that got a dollar a word for everything he wrote.

XIX.

I suppose you get your plots from old stories that are out of print and tell 'em over in new words, don't you?

XX.

What do you do in addition to writing to make a living?

XXI.

Do you paste all your published stories in a scrapbook?

XXII.

Does your wife object to heroines who don't resemble her?

XXIII.

Where can you buy that magazine containing your latest story?

XXIV.

My grandmother's niece on her father's side was a writer. She wrote—let me think. (Business of thinking for half hour.)

XXV.

With what word is it best to begin stories?

XXVI.

Is it true that authors eat fish for brain food?

XXVII.

Do you write under your own name?

XXVIII.

Are there really only three cities in which a story can be laid?

XXIX.

Did Shakespeare write Bacon's plays?

XXX.

Why are heroes so often named Peter?

XXXI.

How many words is it best to have in a title?

XXXII.

Is it actually possible to construct a love story on the typewriter?

XXXIII.

Do you use a map with strings and thumb-tacks to construct detective yarns? (This to writers of long detective stories.)

XXXIV.

What letter on your typewriter do you hit oftenest?

XXXV.

Why don:t you write plays? If you write one successful one, you will never have to work again.

XXXVI.

How can you tell where to start a story?

XXXVII.

How can you tell when to stop a story?

XXXVIII.

Did Dickens really write so small that he had to stick a pin in his manuscript to tell where he left off?

XXXIX.

What's the best name for a heroine?

XL.

If a character in a story covers a certain distance in a taxicab in a certain time, do you go out and hire a taxicab, and time the actual distance?

XLI.

Do people who own houses ever sue you for mentioning their street number in your story?

XLII.

Do you have to take the Editors out to lunch?

XLIII.

Are you bothered much with people asking you freak questions?

The Editor

Right There!

GENERAL WASHINGTON LEE was the most boastful darky in the regiment. All the way across on the transport he had been telling the world what he was going to do to the German army. Naturally, when the outfit finally arrived in the front lines his companions looked for him to produce. But Wash appeared to be in no hurry.

"Yo' all so brave, why don' yo' go out an' git some of dem Jummans lak yo' said?" sneered one.

"Ah's 'gwine. Ah's 'gwine. Gimme time," responded George.

He peeked cautiously over the top. Seeing no activity from the German line, he crawled over and finally stood erect.

"Come on, Jumman," he quavered.

Then he waited. Silence reigned supreme.

"Come on, yo' cowards!" he shouted, feeling safe at last. "Come on out heah and meet yo' master. Come on, show me somethin', Ah'm waitin'."

At that moment a German artilleryman dropped a shell within a dozen yards of Wash. The explosion blew him unhurt back into his own trench.

"What yo' got ter say now?" taunted a companion.

Wash considered.

"Well," he retorted, "no matter w... you say about dem Jummans, yo' go... admit they suah gives yo' service wh... yo' ask fo' it."

The Best Cure.

Mrs. Koppikat was a hypochondriac and whatever complaint another had she always had, or had it quite recently.

The other day a friend of here dropped in, and in the course of conversation remarked:

"I've been suffering terribly of late from insomnia."

"So have I," she answered, "something dreadful."

"And what did you do for it?" inquired the friend eagerly.

"Why, my dear, I find the only thing that does me any real good is to go to bed and sleep it off."

Do You Love Your Neighbor Better Than Yourself?

Then DON'T buy next week's Ledger.

Because next week's Ledger is the long heralded

GREAT MYSTERY NUMBER.

It's running off the giant presses now, ten thousand copies an hour.

It's packed from cover to cover with ingenious enigmas, spun in the form of fascinating stories that open with a rush and end with a surprise bang.

It required eight months to gather the material.

It arrives next week.

It will never come again.

It's the best number ever turned out in the Boyce plant.

It's also the most absorbing number.

When it was made up, the Editors called it "one day and then some."

And if you love your neighbor better than yourself, DON'T buy a copy.

WHY?

So that your neighbor can buy YOUR copy and have the good time of his life!

WHEN BILL LOST FAITH

by HAROLD H. SNELLING

I HAVE long had a conviction that the best way to get accurate information is to go straight to headquarters for it; so as Billy June sat opposite me, busily engaged in making an intricate pattern of wet rings with the bottom of his glass on the table-top, I decided to settle once for all the truth or fallacy of the old saying that there is honor among thieves.

"Bill," said I, "in your opinion is the old saying about honor among thieves borne out by the facts?"

"That saying," replied Bill, "was a hoary old joke before Robin Hood was old enough to lift a long bow."

"But——," I started to object.

"No buts about it," said Bill. "I know what I am talking about. I trusted a burglar once, and it cost me twenty-five dollars to find out what I am giving you for nothing."

I nodded in appreciation of the cheapness of the service.

"Just to prove my contention," continued Bill, "and to illustrate how hard it is to get a partner that you can trust, I'll give you the details.

"It was about five years ago that I ran across Hophead Wilson in a little town called Reedsdale, in New York State.

"I had sold the Fort Huron Hotel, in Chicago, to a trusting hick for twelve hundred dollars. I don't remember who did own the Fort Huron at that time, but I knew there was to be an embarrassing situation the first time that Mr. Farmer tried to exercise an owner's prerogatives; so I decided to retire to Reedsdale for a few week's rest.

"Hophead was at the top of his profession in those days, and the best second-story man that ever carried a jimmy. Diamonds was his specialty and he could nose them out like an English setter working on quail.

"Hophead was glad to see me, when he met me in the hotel lobby, and said so; but when he found out that I had twelve hundred dollars with me, he acted like a man meeting a long lost brother and insisted that we get a room together.

"One night, about a week after I had arrived in Reedsdale, while Hophead and I were playing pinochle, he stopped in the middle of his deal and said:

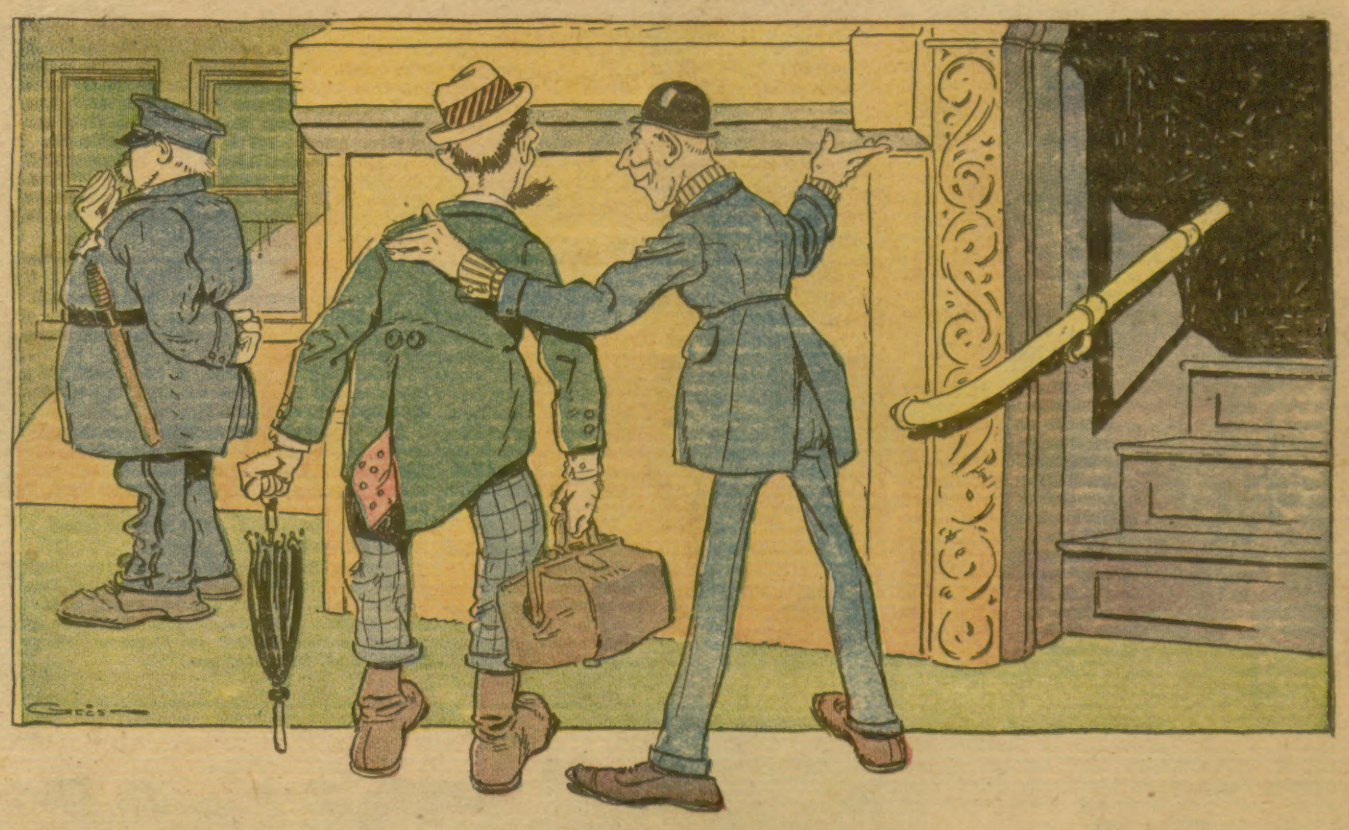
"'Bill, did you ever hear of Mrs. De Peysters' diamond necklace—the one she brought back from Paris?'

"'Did Lieutenant Perry ever hear of the North Pole,' says I. 'If there is any adult outside of Hoboken who hasn't heard of that necklace it's because they are deaf, dumb and blind. Pictures and descriptions of it are a standard filler for Sunday supplements in every newspaper in the country.'

"'What would you say,' asked Hophead, 'if I was to tell you that I could have it dismantled and sold inside of two weeks if I had a little help?'

"'Well,' says I, 'I don't know just what I would say, but I would have a deep-rooted suspicion that if I looked, I would find a fresh needle mark on your arm. That necklace is in the strongest safe deposit vault in the State.'

"'Now you listen to me a minute,' says Hophead, 'and I'll give you some inside information.



"I Had Sold the Fort Huron Hotel in Chicago to a Trusting Hick for Twelve Hundred Dollars."

"'NEXT Saturday Mrs. De Peysters entertains the Duke of Morganza at her country home, Blackmere, about five miles from here. To properly impress the Duke with the De Peysters' millions she will wear the necklace Saturday night, and it won't get back into safe deposit until Monday. I am real chummy with one of the maids and I've got the floor plan of the house in my head and the back door key in my pocket. Now what do you think of that?'

"'Where do I come in?' says I.

"'You,' says Hophead, 'get a show for two reasons; first, you have got to furnish two hundred dollars for a paste duplicate that we can leave in place of the original so that we can have a good start before they find out that we have been collecting. The second reason is that I will need a man to watch the outside for any stray 'tecs that may be suffering from insomnia.'

"The simple beauty of Hophead's scheme, combined with his reputation for getting results, appealed to me so strongly, that when he offered to give me his diamond ring, as security for my two hundred, until he got back with the paste necklace, I agreed to go into partnership with him.

"Friday night Hophead got back from New York with the little joker we were going to trade to Mrs. De Peysters and we went up to our room to have a look at it. I had been expecting to see something real fine, so when Hophead opens the little oblong box and shows me what he had, I yelled for help. A blind man from Oshkosh could have told that it was the cheapest kind of imitation and would not fool a school boy. I asked Hophead what he had done with the hundred and ninety-nine dollars he had left after he had bought the necklace, but he got so peevish, and as it was really Mrs. De Peysters who was going to be the ultimate consumer, I let it pass.

"Saturday night we hired the fastest car in Reedsdale and 2 o'clock saw us at Blackmere. We left the car about a hundred yards from the driveway in a clump of shadows and turned out the lights. There was a couple of lights still burning in what Hophead said was the servants' quarters, but these winked out one by one, and after waiting about a half hour Hophead said he would take a chance.

"'You stall around,' says he, 'and if you see any one pussyfooting around, blow that auto horn; then meet me up the road by that big bowlder.'

"Hophead feels in his pocket for his key and the dummy necklace, then vanished into the hedge.

"I strained my eyes looking for suspicious strangers and was beginning to find out that I possessed nerves when Hophead wiggled thru the hedge at my side, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

"'Well, I got it,' says he; 'the old lady must have been expecting me; she had it laying on a little table by her bed.'

"WE STARTED the car with as little noise as possible, and kept her muffled until we were well away from Blackmere, then we streaked for Reedsdale. On our way back Hophead let me have a look at the necklace. When I saw that old lady's diamond necklace shimmering in the moonlight and got to thinking how she would carry on when she saw that Woolworth imitation, I started to laugh.

"'Don't laugh,' says Hophead; 'it brings bad luck.'

"'Yes,' says I, 'bad luck to Mrs. De Peysters,' and I laughed some more.

"I dropped Hophead at the hotel and I took the car around to the garage. I walked back to the hotel, and as I stepped into the lobby I met Hophead with a telegram in his hand and the fear of Sing Sing in his eyes.

"'Bill,' says he, 'I just got this wire from my old pal, Tony Costello. He says that I am wanted for that Twenty-sixth street job and that a Central office man is due here this morning. We have got to hike and hike quick.'

"'Hophead,' says I, 'far be it from me to bring up a sordid subject like money at a time like this, when you stand to lose your liberty and the pursuit of other people's money, but how about my half of the pelf? If you are wanted, you will have to travel alone, because a nice cool cell has no attractions for me.'

"'I have got that all figured out,' says Hophead. 'I'll make my first jump to Chicago, see my fence, and mail you your half to some safe place.'

"'Hophead,' says I, 'you are a grand little burglar, and I give you credit, but when it comes to figuring you are in the kindergarten class.'

"'You don't think I would double-cross a pal, do you?' says he, hurt like.

"'No,' says I, 'but you might have a lapse of memory.'

"We argued for the best part of ten seconds before I could get Hophead to give in to me and accept my plan. I agreed to advance him six hundred on his share of the necklace and mail him the rest as soon as I could dispose of it. I was to get his address from the personal column of one of the Chicago newspapers.

"While Hophead was cramming some clothes into a suitcase I stood beside him and counted out six hundred dollars for him. Then he passed over the necklace and the information that he expected five thousand dollars for the balance of his share.

"About a half hour after Hophead had left, and while I was packing a bag, I happened to kick an old suit that Hophead had left lying on the floor and I was disillusioned for life. The coat pocket gaped open and out rolled that dummy necklace that should have been five miles away."

"He forgot to leave it in place of the real one," I hazarded.

"Forgot nothing," exploded Bill. "He never entered the house that night. He bought two paste duplicates with my money and sold me the best one, with the aid of that fake telegram, for six hundred dollars. Is it any wonder that I have lost faith?"

"But," I objected, "at first you said your experience had only cost you twenty-five dollars, and now by your own accounting it cost you six hundred—what's the answer?"

"Well," said Bill, a grin overspreading his face, "in the excitement attending Hophead's hurried departure I happened to get into the wrong compartment of my belt, and I gave him six hundred dollars in high-class counterfeits that I had paid twenty-five for the week before. I sold my necklace for two hundred before I left Reedsdale, so I wasn't out much. But it was an awful blow to my faith in human nature."

"I Met Hophead With a Telegram in His Hand and the Fear of Sing Sing in His Eye."

A Lincoln Speech.

IT DEVELOPS that Lincoln once refused to make a speech at Gettysburg, for the peculiar reason that he "had no speech to make." He explained:

"It is somewhat important in my position that one should not say foolish things if he can help it, and it very often happens that the only way to help it is to say nothing at all."

It is recorded that the audience cheered this statement enthusiastically. And with good reason, for it was a very wise and excellent speech, which might be studied to advantage by statesmen now functioning at Washington.

Professional Loss.

HIS friend noticed that the dentist was looking blue and inquired, "What is the matter, Joe?"

"Why, I've had an ulcerated tooth and yesterday it got so bad I had to pull it myself."

"Did you get relief?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then why this grouch?"

"Why this grouch? Because, you idiot, I once got $400 for treating a tooth like that."

THIN ICE

By Peter Cotton

The Preceding Events

DR. HEDRIC HALLAM, who has been practicing medicine in the northern part of the State of Washington, left his clientele there because of a mistake he had made in filling a prescription. He was unfortunate in the events that followed—he was cheated in a game of cards at Portland and put off the train at Eugene because somebody had stolen his purse and ticket. In Eugene he took a room at a mediocre boarding house and that same evening invited, and entertained in his lodgings a man who resembled him physically to a remarkable degree. The stranger died of heart failure while in Hallam's room and the doctor effected a change of garments and identification so that the dead man would be mistaken for him. Then he assumed the name of his double,

HENRY HAMILTON, and taking the letters, photographs and money which belonged to Hamilton, he set out for the other's home town, Rock Springs. Among the photographs was a picture of Hamilton's sweetheart,

NANCY MAYNARD, who appeared to be an attractive and spirited young girl.

Testing his ability to impersonate Henry Hamilton by going first to Pocotello where an acquaintance cashed a check for him, Hallam met with a difficulty at once—he was accepted as Hamilton without question but accused at once of an assault to murder, which Hamilton was thought to have made upon a man called Larson. Thru a Portland acquaintance,

POWERS, Hallam proved an alibi—that he had been in Portland the night it was alleged the assault took place.

LYONS, the lawyer of Rock Springs, in charge of the senior Hamilton's estate, came to Pocotello upon hearing that Hamilton had re-appeared and thru him, the impostor received a fairly accurate conception of the situation he would have to face in Rock Springs. Cleared of the charge Larson had made, thru Lyons' good offices, Hallam considered himself out of danger until Powers made an insinuation as to the remarkable resemblance between Hallam and "the man who died in Eugene."

In Rock Springs the townspeople seemed friendly enough, especially Lyons and his wife, who took Hallam to their home. The latter found that part of his heritage as Henry Hamilton was a house on a hill secluded from the rest of the village, and here he chose to live alone except for his horse, Satan, and Fox, his dog. He received a letter from Powers asking a loan of $500. Hallam sent the sum, knowing it to be the price of Powers' silence. He had not yet encountered Nancy Maynard. When he finally met her she did not, as he had feared, discover that he was merely posing as her old lover. But her father,

PAP MAYNARD, seemed to consider Hallam as an enemy, and

GILMORE, a town loafer, shared this animosity. Gradually Hallam won his way into Nancy's heart and he asked her to marry him. She consented, thinking he was Hamilton.

Powers arrived in town and made serious trouble for Hallam by spreading the rumor that he could prove the latter was an impostor. The unscrupulous blackmailer confided to Gilmore that the Doctor had a large birthmark on his left breast. Gilmore had known Hamilton from childhood and was sure he had no such mark. Altho Powers confronted Hallam with this accusation Hallam refused to pay the sum demanded and denied the charge.

Hearing the gossip, "Pap" Maynard made remarks about her lover which Nancy resented, and in the quarrel which her retorts precipitated her father locked her in her room. The girl was determined now to elope with Hallam.

This story started in No. 25, the Ledger for June 19. Back copies may be had from our agents or newsdealers.

CHAPTER XIV.
BLACKMAIL.

DR. HALLAM felt very much as tho he were in a state of siege. Increasing dangers forbade him going back to the town and love kept him from leaving the country—so he sat thru the bright, warm days of advancing May sullen and discontented. Beneath and opposite, almost a mile away, nestled the Maynard home, surrounded by its green-paled fence, but Nancy was not to be seen. For several days she had remained or had been kept indoors and he was becoming anxious for the effect of Powers' disclosures. As the perils which threatened him drew nearer, his love increased and there were moments when he felt reckless and daring enough to ride to the Maynard home and demand admittance. He wanted Nancy as he had never wanted anything in his life.

The end of the week was drawing near, as well as the end of the day. It was Saturday and unusual activity prevailed upon the streets of the town. By the aid of his glass he could see the people moving along the main street, and being aware that that was the only day when Maynard remained at the store after dark, he was very much inclined to ride to the Maynard home and make an attempt to see Nancy. His reflections were intruded upon by the queued head of a Chinaman coming over the brow of the hill. Dr. Hallam watched his awkward approach with a sense of amused curiosity. John's face was wreathed in smiles as he stopped in front of him.

"You Henlee?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm Henlee. What you want—do my washee?"

"No, no. No washee. Something else."

He glanced cautiously about him and beckoned with some timidity toward the cabin.

"You come," he said.

Dr. Hallam followed him a short distance, and then from his blouse the Chinaman drew a letter.

"For me?" asked Dr Hallam, as he took it.

John nodded. "From missee. You know."

Eagerly Dr. Hallam ripped the envelope, and, as the Chinaman said, it was from Nancy. She wrote to say that she would meet him along the trail about 7 o'clock somewhere between their homes, and that she would go. His eyes lingered upon the last sentence—that she would go. Did she mean that she would run away with him? There seemed no other meaning, and the world immediately became rosy-hued and delightful.

"You tell her I say all right," he told the Chinaman. "And here—take this." He gave the man a five dollar gold piece. "And, remember," he cautioned, "you are not to tell any one. You sabe?"

"I sabe."

As the man departed with his ineffaceable grin of ingratiation Dr. Hallam rushed tumultuously inside the cabin. He grasped Fox by the shoulders, flung him on his back, rolled him over and punched his sides with an abandon worthy a boy.

"Get your clothes ready," he shouted. "We are going to skeedaddle. And go out and tell that black angel to take the kinks out of his back!"

With the fun of frolic gleaming in his eyes Fox ran barking about the room, while Dr. Hallam looked to his blankets and fastened his money belt about him as tho he were going to go that very instant. Powers, Gilmore, Maynard—the entire camp—paled to nothingness in the hot glow of joy and success which came to him. If there were obstacles in his path he failed to see them, if danger lurked ahead it was unheeded. But one thing absorbed him—he was going to take Nancy and go into the world and be happy and safe.

He went afoot down the steep trail looking toward the Maynard home, then on over the more gradual descent to a washout in the side of the hill—a point of vantage free from observation where they had sought shelter many times. Standing fairly in the center of the trail with the moonbeams falling brightly upon him he waited, intently listening. The sharp tread of a horse came to his ears. Thrilled with joy that she was coming ready for instant flight, he watched expectantly for the rider to turn the bend of rocks, then with a stifled exclamation his hand fell from his peering eyes. The rider was Powers.

PERVERSE fate had sent him there at an inopportune time. But there he was, smiling, urbane and as affable as tho no shadow fell between them. Considering his malevolent incitements in Rock Springs, Dr. Hallam felt a desire to give him a sound thrashing. Prudence and the belief that Nancy would soon come upon the scene restrained him.

Powers must have been partaking of Gilmore's private stock for he was slightly intoxicated. Dr. Hallam noticed it as he dismounted and stood beside his horse. With his back to the washout Powers was more or less in the shadows compared with the spot where Dr. Hallam stood. Observing Dr. Hallam's expression of stern disgust he drew erect and spoke with more formality than he had at first intended.

"I am on my way to your place," he said. "Do you care to go back?"

"There is no need to; and there is nothing you have to say which I care to listen to."

Powers sneered. "You are mighty independent all of a sudden."

"I have always been independent of you. If you have come to see me you may as well turn back. It will do you no good."

"Oh, I don't know. I can talk to you here, can't I? And what I have to say is worth your time!"

Dr. Hallam glanced apprehensively down the road. Nancy was not in sight. Hoping to get rid of Powers before she came he made a quick, impatient gesture.

"Well, what is it? Say it and let's have done with it."

Powers laughed with malicious enjoyment. "I know that you are not Henry Hamilton. I can prove that you are Dr. Hedric Hallam, whose body is supposed to be buried in Eugene, Oregon. Does that interest you?"

"Not in the slightest," said Dr. Hallam without a quaver.

"You must keep a fine private stock in your cellar?"

"Never mind my stock. The point is that you have received in cash more than ninety thousand dollars by impersonating Henry Hamilton, by making the people of this community believe that you are a reformed, regenerated scoundrel. And what is more, you have done something—I do not pretend to say what—but you have done something to the daughter of Pap Maynard——"

"Easy," hissed Dr. Hallam. "One wrong word in that direction and I will kill you as you stand there!"

Powers' attempt to laugh was somewhat of a failure. "I am not saying there is anything wrong," he corrected, "and so far as I am concerned I don't care a d—n what you have done in any direction so long as I get my bit out of the coin. That is clear enough, isn't it?"

"It is. You mean that if I will pay you money you will say nothing about what you profess to know?"

"Exactly. And I know a lot. I know that Dr. Hedric Hallam has a bright red birthmark on his left breast. I know that Henry Hamilton has not such a mark. I know that one word from me will lead the prosecuting attorney of this county to ask to see your breast. Dare you show it to him?"

Dr. Hallam actually laughed, recklessly, daringly.

"I will be glad to show it to him," he said. ""You have made a mistake. There is no such mark there."

"Then let me see."

"You!" Dr. Hallam spoke with withering contempt. "Why, you puppy!" he cried. "You ought to be kicked!"

Powers shrugged his shoulders. "You met Henry Hamilton in Eugene," he continued, heedless of the threat, "and he died in your room. You, yourself, were a fugitive from justice, with a price on your head. To lose your own identity and to steal his inheritance you exchanged clothes with him and came here to rob his estate. If you are arrested—and you are likely to be—no power on earth can ever convince a jury that you did not kill him. Do you see what you are up against? Are you fool enough to refuse to buy my silence?"

"There is the road. You had better go!"

"You refuse?"

"Go, or I'll kick you!"

He grasped Powers by the shoulders, twisted him about and gave him a shove in the direction of his horse.

"You'll change your mind before another day," Powers threatened with a smile that was both a menace and a snarl.

CHAPTER XV.
"YOU NEVER LOVED ME!"

BELIEVING that within an hour he would be galloping away with his sweetheart, the threat had little effect

(Continued on Page 12.)

His Furious Blows Were Ineffectual, and the Lighter, Lither Man Hurled Jabs Upon His Face as Sharp as the Click of a Bullet.

Blood of Breathitt

by LEWIS H. KILPATRICK

THE young mountaineer noiselessly let himself down from the top of the giant bowlder, where he had been watching the trail, and crouching in its shelter, listened, one hand in the bosom of his blue cotton shirt. Footsteps sounded along the trail, slow, careless steps that snapped impeding twigs and crunched indifferently over the ruts. One of the comers was talking in a flushed voice:

"I tell ye, Nettie, hit was a caution the way I cleaned out them six Germin machine gun nests. I done hit all by myself, too. The general he give me a medal fer hit; 'lowed I was a hero and had jest about won the war fer the Alleys. 'Course hit was the truth; but, as soon as he got out o' sight, I throwed the medal away. Hit 'peared too much like braggin' to be wearin' sech things. Trinkets is fer wimmen. Anyway, ye know, I ain't a feller to git stuck on myself. Naw, I ain't." There was a pause.

"Here, don't be jerkin' yer hand away like that. Jest let me hole hit a leetle while, Nettie."

The man behind the bowlder drew a .45 from his shirt. His eyes narrowed; his smooth, strong lips tightened. For a moment he regarded the sinister black barrel doubtfully. Then, with sudden resolution, he laid the .45 in a crevice in the rock, covered it with a handful of dry leaves, and stood up.

"Ye stay thar," he muttered to the hidden weapon. "If I can't handle Bulger withouten ye, then he can handle me."

"Wal—Howdy Folks! I Weren't Expectin' to Happen on Ye All."

He struck the trail below the bowlder, meeting Bulger and Nettie.

"Wal—howdy, folks! I weren't expectin' to happen on ye all."

The perky red mustache on Bulger's lip twisted in a sneer. He was dressed in a worn khaki uniform; on his sleeve were two gold service stripes; a rabbit cap was pulled close over his eyes.

"Been huntin' 'shiners, Alvin?" he inquired in a sarcastic tone. "I hear ye've jest about cleaned the licker business out o' Breathitt County. Hit weren't so bad stayin' at home and bein' a deputy sheriff durin' the war, was hit?"

Alvin did not answer. He skilfully maneuvered himself between Bulger and the girl.

"Nettie, air ye goin' back to Hindman School this year?" he asked, walking at her side.

"Naw, she ain't goin' back to Hindman School," declared Bulger. "She's a-goin' to stay here and marry me, that's what she's goin' to do."

Nettie's black eyes snapped. "I haven't said so yet, have I, Bulger Webb? And don't you go making talk about me marrying you until I do say so. Hear me?"

Bulger sulked.

Two years at the mountain seminary not only had improved Nettie's grammar, but they had taught her to think for herself and speak with a freedom unusual to women of the hills. Also she had learned to wear shoes and stockings the year around, do her black hair neatly and dress with a simple effectiveness that brought out the charms of her slender figure.

"BULGER, the feller who git's Nettie'll git a mighty smart gal." Alvin looked at him gravely. "He'll git a mighty good gal. Fact is, thar's pow-ful few fellers in these parts who's fitten to marry her. And seein' as she ain't got no brother to say hit, I 'low that whoever does aim to git her will, fust o' all, have to tell her the truth about hisself."

Bulger met the hidden challenge with a squaring of his shoulders. His red mustache bristled.

"Who air ye to talk that o' way about my gal?" he demanded. "A spyin' deputy sheriff, a she-man who stayed home with his ma and pa and let other fellers go off and git shot to pieces——"

"I don't see none o' ye missin'," Alvin interrupted.

Bulger's anger increased. "Hit ain't yer fault I ain't all shot up. More'n likely ye wisht I'd 'a' been kilt; then ye could 'a' gone on courtin' Nettie and married her. While I was over thar wallerin' in blood and killin' Germins, ye was here raidin' stills and takin' hit easy and talkin' to my gal."

"That's not so!"

The three had stopped in the middle of the trail. Nettie confronted Bulger.

"That's not so, I tell you," she repeated. "I been down at Hindman School most of the time. Alvin's been here in Breathitt. When I was at home, he didn't come near me. I've seen him only in passing or when I'd go to Jackson town. He hasn't been courting me a minute since you left for the Army."

Bulger grinned. Her vehemence and the sense of her words cheered him, in spite of her hostile attitude.

"That's all right, honey," he soothed. "I knowed ye'd stick to me. No gal with any gumption'd 'low a coward to hang 'round her. Don't ye worry, honey, I ain't a-doubtin' ye."

Nettie voluntarily resumed her place on the opposite side of Alvin. They continued their walk in silence. The sun had dropped behind the western ridges and twilight was shrouding the valley.

A little way farther a young rabbit hopped from the weeds to the middle of the trail. There it paused, its eyes large with wonder, its muzzle twitching, watching the approach of its natural enemies with animal innocence.

Without losing a step Bulger stooped and picked up a stone. He swung his arm with the quickness of a sling. His aim was true. Proudly he held the small, quivering body, wet with its own blood, before Nettie.

"Take hit, honey. Hit'll be mighty fine eatin' fried in pork fat and served up with corncake and 'taters."

Nettie reached for the rabbit; then, with sudden repulsion, withdrew her hand.

"You hadn't ought to have done it, Bulger," she reproved. "The little thing wasn't hurting you."

"Hump!" Bulger flung the rabbit, still quivering, into the brush. "Since ye're too stuck-up to eat hit, some varmint will," he added contemptuously.

They rounded a bend in the trail. Before them, a short way up the mountainside, was a cabin built of upright undressed planks and roofed with clapboards. Fragrant wood smoke curled from the rock chimney. A rickety slat fence inclosed the yard.

"You'll drop in and have a bite of supper, won't you, Alvin?" Nettie invited at the gate.

Alvin glanced sidewise at Bulger, who needed no invitation.

"Yas, I reckon I'll stop fer a spell, if hit ain't too much bother."

He took a seat on a split-log bench near the door. Nettie went into the cabin. Bulger looked after her covetously, then lit a cigarette.

"ALVIN, thar ain't no use in ye actin' contrary over this here business," he drawled in a conciliatory tone. "I don't want no hard feelin's twixt us. 'T ain't my fault that her folks favors me more'n they favor ye. The best man wins, ye know. Nettie she's a leetle mulish, but I'll bring her 'round all right. I'll marry her fer all her fool notions. Jest ye see if I don't."

Alvin rested his bare elbows on his knees, his chin in his double palms. His keen gray eyes pierced the dusk to where Bulger was leaning against a tree.

"Do ye love Nettie?" he asked suddenly.

"Do I love her?" Bulger was puzzled. "What do ye mean by that?"

"Do ye love her enough to tell her somethin' she don't know about ye, and then take yer chances?"

Bulger straightened. Alvin waited for him to

Alvin Was Beside Him, His Powerful Body Rigid. "Bulger, Air Ye Goin' to Tell Her Now?" He Demanded.

answer, but when he did not, went on:

"Bulger, I ain't a-goin' to stand twixt ye and her if she wants ye. I ain't a-meanin' to spile her happiness fer a minnet. But I'm here this evenin' to hear ye speak with yer own tongue what I has in mind.

"Things can happen when ye and Nettie air alone. After all she ain't no more'n a woman. She may sof'en on ye. She may promise to marry ye afore she really knows ye. That's why I'm here, Bulger, not to meddle in what ain't none o' my business, but to see that ye totes fair. Do ye understand what I mean?" He bent forward, his jaw hard with determination, peering at the man by the tree.

Bulger growled an oath. Throwing away his cigarette, he advanced on Alvin.

"Ye keep outen this"—his voice was menacing. "This ain't none o' yer affair. Ye keep outen hit, ye slacker!"

Alvin sprang up, his fists clinched. Bulger halted. Just then Nettie appeared at the door. She watched, saying nothing. Alvin did not see her.

"Bulger Webb," he began, "ye've said things to me this evenin' that many a man has been kilt fer sayin'. Ye've called me a slacker and a coward. Ye've 'lowed I stayed home durin' the war because I was 'feered to go and fight. And I've stood by and took it."

He paused a moment, then continued: "Ye know as well as anybody why I didn't enlist. I had a pa and ma, both of 'em down with the misery, and I was the only one to look after 'em. Pa he didn't have nothin' to live on. Ma she was too crippled to work. Hit was up to me to take keer of 'em as best I could.

"Hit didn't come easy." Alvin shook his head. "Hit hurt like ever'thing to see the other fellers goin' off while I stayed home. But pa and ma they'd stuck to me when I was puny and helplesslike—and I had to stick to them. They come fust so long as thar was other men, withouten families, to do the fightin'."

Bulger snorted derisively. "Whar's yer pa and ma now, Mister Deputy Sheriff?"

"Dead."

There was a moment of uneasy silence.

"The influenzy took 'em off last winter. When they was gone I went to Lexington to enlist. The Army men thar 'lowed hit weren't no use then, the Germins had laid down. That was all thar was to hit fer me."

Bulger lit another cigarette. He was looking at the girl in the doorway rather than at Alvin. Alvin was still unaware of her presence. He resumed his seat on the bench, his back to the cabin.

"ANOTHER thing, Bulger," he spoke slowly, thoughtfully. "The way ye figger hit out, I'm jealous o' ye with Nettie. That ain't so. She tole ye herself that I ain't been a-talkin' to her while ye was away. That weren't on yer account, but on hers. I thinks too much o' her to be hangin' 'round her in store clothes." He scraped the ground with the toe of his boot.

"Gals like Nettie is 'titled to the best men, thar is," he added. "I ain't one of 'em. 'T weren't my fault I wasn't a sodjer—but maybe she don't look at hit that a-way. Seein' as I couldn't go and fight fer her, I reckoned I hadn't no right keepin' her company."

A muffled gasp came from the doorway. Alvin looked around. He saw Nettie and flushed.

She leaned toward him from the sill. "Is that what you thought, Alvin?"

He turned his face the other way, staring into the gathering darkness.

"That weren't the only reason I stayed away, Nettie." He hesitated. "Ye see, ye're a lady now, not jest a plain mounting gal. Ye've been to Hindman School and got larnin'. Ye're different from we'uns. I ain't fitten to keep yer company. I ain't had no schoolin' myself to speak of. One o' these days, I reckon, ye'l lbe goin' down to the setlements whar reckon, ye'll be goin' down to the settlements whar ye'll find ye a man who's good enough fer ye. We'uns ain't."

"I'm good enough fer ye, ain't I, Nettie?" Bulger swaggered over to her. "Don't go lettin' him pizen yer heart agin me, honey."

Alvin was beside him, his powerful body rigid. The surrounding darkness was partly relieved by the light from a dingy kerosene lamp that shone thru the doorway and front window of the cabin.

"Bulger, air ye goin' to tell her now?" he demanded.

Nettie forced a laugh.

"Stop quarreling, you boys," she said. "Supper's almost ready. You all come in and sit yourselves down."

Bulger started past her thru the door; but a hand gripped him by the shoulder and jerked him back. Alvin faced him, his hat off, the lamplight playing weirdly upon his features.

Bulger twisted himself free and stepped back, snarling. "Do ye want to git kilt?"

Alvin disregarded the threat. "Bulger Webb, afore ye set foot inside o' that house, listen to me," he commanded. "Fer two week now, ever since ye come back to Breathitt, ye've been goin' 'round these parts tellin' o' what ye done in the war. Other fellers has come home, some of 'em wounded, but narry a one of 'em has took on as much as ye have. To hear ye talk a body'd think ye'd whopped the whole Germin army. When the fact is, them who done the most says the least. Braggin' ain't becomin' a reel sodjer, Bulger Webb."

"Ye're jealous, that's what ye air. Didn't I volunteer?"

"Yas, ye volunteered. And so did mighty nigh ever' other Breathitt County man who went."

Alvin glanced around to make sure that Nettie was still watching. She was resting against the door jamb; but her fine head, with its curly black hair, was held high.

Bulger began to shift uneasily. He nibbled at his mustache.

"I reckon I'll be a-goin', Nettie," he said, and started to move away. But again the hand gripped his shoulder.

"Naw, ye don't. Not yit." Alvin held him tightly. "Afore ye go I want to see yer discharge papers. Turn 'round here to the light. That's hit. Face Nettie thar. Now, whar's them papers?"

Bulger breathed thickly. "Lemme go, Alvin. I ain't got 'em with me just now. Lemme go, I say."

Above them came Nettie's voice, calm and authoritative thru the still evening air:

"Alvin, stop that foolishness. Turn him loose. He's my guest the same as you. Take your hand off his shoulder."

Alvin started to protest; then released him, his rugged features suddenly pale. He looked around quickly for something to use as a weapon. At the same time Bulger, with a sidewise jump, got between him and Nettie, fumbling at the bosom of his flannel shirt.

THE girl gave a little scream, but stood motionless.

Alvin sprang at Bulger with a savage grunt: "Take cover in front o' a woman, will ye!" A revolver barrel flashed in the lamplight. The two men, grappling, clawing, cursing, fell to the ground. A stream of fire shot from them into the darkness, followed by a strangled cry. The report echoed down the valley.

Nettie closed her eyes, leaning heavily against the door frame. Something hard dropped at her feet. She looked. The writhing figures slowly untangled. Alvin rose to his knees, his nails digging into Bulger's right wrist, his other hand clutching his throat.

He dragged him away from the cabin, out of sight of the girl.

"Take off that air uniform, take hit off right here and now," Alvin ordered.

Bulger gasped. "I—I can't." He staggered back against a tree, panting. "I ain't got much else on, Alvin."

"That don't make no difference. Joe Tuttle lives three mile from here. Go to him, he'll loan ye some clothes. Take off that uniform!" Alvin repeated.

Bulger, unsteadily, began to undress.

"Now speak out loud so's Nettie can hear ye." Alvin raised his voice, "Whar'd ye git that uniform?"

Bulger hesitated. Alvin's teeth snapped close to his face.

"I bought hit from a feller who'd been discharged and needed money," he confessed.

"And what become o' ye atter ye deserted the Army at Fort Thomas? Say hit loud."

"I went to West Virginney."

"Yas, went to West Virginney and hid in the mountains, and run a still, and waited till the war was over to come home and brag o' all ye didn't do. Ye skunk! No man's fitten to wear them clothes who ain't willin' to fight in 'em. Take 'em all off, I tell ye!"

"We'uns at the sheriff's office got papers tellin' what ye'd done," Alvin continued. "I 'lowed to keep hit quiet so long as ye didn't come back. But when ye did come back, actin' sassy and a-lyin' to folks, I seen yer time was up."

Bulger's nerve was gone. "Air ye goin' to arrest me, Alvin?" his teeth chattered. "Please, please don't go doin' that!" he begged. "I'll go 'way! I promise to go 'way and never come back! Please don't arrest me, Alvin!"

Alvin rolled the uniform into a bundle.

"Naw, I ain't goin' to arrest ye," he said shortly. "Hit ain't no consarn o' mine what happens to ye

(Continued on Page 14.)

Continuing This Virile Story of Vikings and Adventure

Eric Strongbow By J. C. Koford

If You Missed the First Installment

ERIC STRONGBOW, a Viking of the Eighth Century, blond, fearless and stalwart, defied his father,

VISBUR JARL, who wished to force Eric into marriage with

SNOWFRID, the beautiful but cold, unresponsive daughter of

THE EARL OF ORKNEY. Altho submitting to his father's will in going thru with the betrothal ceremony, Eric complied dully with no joy in his heart, for he knew that the maiden loved

OLAF, the young bard of the Danish kingdom. Eric was about to make a trip to Ireland bent on conquest with

THE THUNDERER, THORGILS, who hoped to capture the daughter of the King of Ireland. Eric, himself, desired to seize the crown of the King, and if he succeeded, his father promised that he would grant anything his son desired, and Eric determined to ask to be freed from his betrothal.

When the Vikings arrived in Ireland, a fierce battle ensued in which the brother of Eric,

HELVIN, was slain. Eric swore to revenge himself upon Malachy, the King of Ireland, who had killed Helvin; in the heat of his anger, accompanied by

RAEL, A SKRAELLING, whose life he had saved, Eric captured the daughter of the Irish kingdom for the Thunderer, who desired to possess her. When he found himself alone with

EILEEN, his beautiful prisoner, Eric could not prevent love from surging thru his heart and instead of giving her over to Thorgils, he fought for her possession and won the battle. Together he and Eileen, followed by Rael, fled in a chariot, but were attacked by Irish warriors in the midst of a dense wood.

This story began in No. 29 the Ledger for July 17. Back copies may be obtained from our agents or newsdealers.

CHAPTER V.
OF STRONGBOW'S BOLD WORDS AND THE REWARD HE COULD NOT ACCEPT.

WHEN the fog cleared from Eric's brain he sensed, without being actually aware of what it was, the feel of a bed beneath him, of silken sheets covering his aching limbs. For some space of time he lay inert, too stiff and sore to move, too apathetic to marvel at his strange surroundings. Gradually curiosity forced him to open his eyes and stare at the crude brilliancy of the room, at the wonderful tapestried hangings, the splendidly wrought gold torch-bearers.

"Ah, Lord, so thou art awake at last. Odin knows I feared that thou might never see Denmark's shores again." It was Rael who spoke, and his voice was the last effort that dragged Eric's still wavering senses back into the land of consciousness.

"How came I here?" he asked faintly.

"When the men of Ireland poured down upon us we fought as brothers fight, back to back. They struck thee down, and were like to do the same to me when the daughter of the King broke thru their ranks and bade them spare us both. Under her eyes they carried thee here, and the leach dressed thy wounds. What they will do with us only the Fates know." He bit the last words off sharply, and inclined his bushy head toward the door. "Some one comes."

With little ceremony the door was flung open, and a dozen men-at-arms surged in, scowling at the two Vikings. For years upon years the Danes had ravaged Ireland, and their very name was hateful to the men who spilled their blood so recklessly to drive them back. The leader strove to make his tone courteous, tho his malevolent gaze softened not a whit.

"The Ard-Righ wouldst see thee when thou art hale enough to come," he growled. "Thou," with a nod to the Skraelling, "wilt stay here."

Strongbow rose stiffly from the bed, and groped for his weapons, his steel byrnie and raven-crested helmet. When he was accountered he straightened up. "Lead on," he said haughtily.

High-King Malachy sat on his throne, with Eileen at his right hand when the Viking strode into the room. There was no abatement in the dignity and sternness of Eric's manner before the man who had well been termed, "the pillar of nobility of the Western world." Strongbow's mighty limbs and bold, handsome face awoke in the Ard-Righ the same admiration that had swept Eileen's hate away while she was yet in his power. As for the Princess, her hands tightened as they lay on her silken knee, and a curious something deep down within her was throbbing until it seemed that her throat must burst with suppressing it. Was it love, unnatural tho it seemed, that clamored for expression and sang unceasingly in her senses? She dared not look up—

"Eric, Jarl's son," spoke the Ard-Righ with the air of quiet dignity for which he was famed, "I had never thought to owe one of thy race a debt of gratitude, but in bringing back my daughter thou hast atoned for——"

"I did it for no love of thee, King Malachy," cried the rover harshly. "It was thy hand that struck down my brother, the one man in all the world for whom I cared most deeply. It was not for thy sake, I say, but because my love for thy daughter exceeded my hate for thee." Carried away by the whirlwind of his passion he leaned forward, his eyes blazing under the tangled mass of hair.

A MURMUR of anger rippled 'round the hall at Strongbow's audacity. That he dared lift his eyes to their beloved Princess seemed a crime well worthy of the rack, but Malachy stilled the sullen rumble with a wave of his hand. "These are bold words, Viking, but whom I invite before me hath the freedom to speak his mind. In spite of thy race and thy bold words I bear thee no ill will."

"My words may be bold, King," returned Eric, tingling with the new knowledge he had gained from Eileen's eyes, "but ask thy daughter whether or not she has learned to return the meed of my affection."

Malachy, in his high seat, searched Eileen's face with kindly gaze. In her flushed cheeks and lowered eyes he read confession. "Dost truly love him, Eileen?"

The King's daughter raised her lovely head, and her gaze steadily met that of Eric Strongbow. Tho the red in her cheeks mantled to a deeper tint, her eyes remained steadily on his while she nodded.

"Go to thy room," said the Ard-Righ quietly. "I would have converse with the man thou lovest." Then, raising his voice, he called to the guards, "Clear the hall."

"Jarl's son," he continued when they were alone, "if my daughter loves thee it would be last in my thoughts to deny her what she craveth. Thy blood is noble, and such a union might well bring us surcease from thy rovers. Tho my people will doubtless cry out against such a marriage I would not be the one to stand 'twixt thee and the woman thou lovest. I salute thee as my son."

For a moment a thrill of purest joy poured over the great, golden-haired Viking. And then—came a vision of Snowfrid's cold and stately beauty, of the bearded dignity of his father, Visbur Jarl, and the binding strength of his romise. Without the life and crown of the generous King he was helpless. Tho he could stoically endure pain, the loss of this beautiful daughter of the South stabbed deeper than any physical agony, and he averted his eyes with a sudden indrawn breath.

"What troubles thee, Eric?"

"It is——" he bit his lips suddenly. Why tell the King that his given word stood between him and the consummation of his fondest wish? Something might yet intervene to give him the chance he craved—and a confession now would work naught but ill. "It is nothing," he finished.

Strongbow strode away thru the halls to the seclusion of his own chambers, but ere he had reached it, Eileen, like a golden haired nymph, slipped from the shadows, and for the first time his arms encircled a woman in a desperate, crushing embrace.

Then, without a word, he rushed to the great, tapestried chamber, there to pace ceaselessly up and down, ignoring the blunt inquiries of Rael. Free, save for the bonds of his word! But that word was more binding than the strongest chains would have been.

"It Was Thy Hand Struck Down My Brother, the One Man in All the World for Whom I Cared Most Deeply."

CHAPTER VI.
OF THE MESSAGE SENT AND WHAT BEFELL THE MESSENGER.

THORGILS' sluggishness in not hurling his hard-bitten veterans against the shattered defenses of the King was a sore puzzle to every soldier who knew of the Viking's landing in Ireland. But the day that followed Eric's triumph occurred an event that explained all.

On the road that stretched down from Malachy's turreted castle to the forest, there galloped, as the sun shone thru the early morning mist, a giant man on a giant horse, the dreaded Raven on his helmet, a white rag fluttering from the helve of his battle-ax.

The guards surrounded him. Like wary hounds about a vicious old boar they conducted him to the King's own presence. And there, with proud defiance that made Eric's breast warm toward his countryman, he delivered the insolent message he had brought.

"My master, Thorgils the Thunderer, sends greetings to thee, Malachy, Ard-Righ of Ireland. He hath wrought much scath upon thy land, but he bids me tell thee he hath sworn every dwelling in Innes-Fail, be it palace of marble or cottage of thatch, shall be given to the flames unless thy daughter, Eileen, is granted him in marriage. And, if thou refuse, every man, woman and child within reach of him shall taste the keen edge of his sword."

With a snarl of anger choking in his throat, Eric half rose from his chair. "Is this a message for such a man as thou, Tomar, to bring?"

The Viking flung a scornful glance at his erstwhile leader. "It is not for me to speak with thee, a Dane, who sits unmolested in the halls of Denmark's foes."

The taunt struck Strongbow like a blow from a blade's flat side. He had not thought how he might appear in the eyes of his countrymen by his rebellion from the Thunderer's brutal authority. Now he read it in Tomar's sneering attitude, and it hurt him deeply. He opened his lips to reply, but the messenger swung about and faced the King.

"Thy answer!" he demanded.

Malachy had listened to the messenger's threat with the drooping lips of despair, but now he rose and looked down from the high seat, his eyes suddenly bright and hard.

"Viking, go back to thy master, and tell him that we are not slaves to do his bidding thus; that every man in Ireland would die to save his Princess such a fate——"

A roar of assent went up from the fighting men in the hall.

With a grim smile the invader turned away. The answer was to his liking, for the plunder, the wine, the gold he expected to gain would vanish if Thorgils were fool enough to quit this island. He heard a woman's voice call sharply, and he turned to face the Princess Eileen, who, white as Iceland's snow, stood beside the high seat.

"Duvgall (black stranger)," she said, staring down into his bearded face on which flashed the light of involuntary admiration. "If I wed with Thorgils will he take galley and sail forever from these parts?"

The Viking nodded.

"Then," cried Eileen, and in spite of her self-control there was the quiver of a sob in her voice, "tell thy chieftain, the sea-wolf, that to save my country, I will become his wife——"

Eric leaped to his feet, his handsome face twisted by passion. "Art mad, Eileen?"

The girl turned to him, her slender hands outstretched. "Forgive me, Strongbow. I love thee, but to save my land I will sacrifice myself, as would even the most thrall among my bondservants. Shall Ireland look to her Princess in vain? Go, Viking, and bear that message to thy master. I shall be ready ere five days are gone!"

AMID a silence that cloaked the despair of all, the messenger strode down the length of the hall, turned at the door with a haughty salute to the white-faced Princess on the dais, and vanished thru the huge door. None saw Rael slip, fox-footed, after him.

Back in his own chamber, spite of the dare-devil quality of his courage, utter despondency overwhelmed Eric. Tho he loved the daughter of the King as woman was never loved before, the word of each promised to part them like a barrier while life lasted. He had sworn to wed Snowfrid unless he killed Malachy, Eileen to take her place at Thorgils' side. Was ever there such a tangled knot under the blue sky? Yet, in spite of the horror that enwrapped him when he

thought of the girl's fresh young beauty in the odious embrace of the Thunderer, he rejoiced at the bravery and loyalty of her in sacrificing more than life that her hapless country might escape the horrors of a pagan war.

The gray pall of evening had swept its misty fingers over all when Rael, the Skraelling, dust-covered and weary, entered Strongbow's chamber. The latter scarcely nodded as his retainer sank upon a stool, and rested his heavy head for an instant upon his knees.

"Where has thou been?" asked Eric, tho he cared not.

"Upon thy business, lord."

"Upon my business!"

Rael chuckled in his beard. "Whom thou lovest, I love; whom thou hatest, him could I kill. When the Princess Eileen gave her message to Tomar the Fleet, I followed him——"

Instantly the Viking was on his feet, tense fingers gripping the other's shoulder. "What then?"

"Tomar will not give that message to the Thunderer."

"You killed him!"

"He had out his sword, so 'twas in fair fight that he fell. Long we struggled on the river bank, and now his body lies beneath it. May Odin waft him to Valhalla, for a braver man I have never seen."

Morality is merely a question of time and geographical location. It was not murder to kill an enemy in single combat in those days. The soldier who strikes down men today is naught but a hero. Yet, what may our descendants think in a score of centuries to come of our unbridled passion on the battlefield? So Eric, throbbing with joy, shook Rael's hand warmly, and thanked him for encompassing the death of Tomar. This unexpected aid urged him to further hope. The arm of the Skraelling had barred the message from Thorgils; some good fortune might yet make Eileen and him free to follow the dictates of love.

Whatever ray of hope might be accorded Eric, there was no such promise of peace in that hot pit of evil, the heart of the Thunderer. When first he sent the fleet-footed Tomar to the palace of the King he believed that victory was in his grasp, for the self-sacrificing patriotism of the Queens of Ireland had long been chanted by bard and soldier. As the days passed, and the fleet one came not, conviction gew upon Thorgils that Malachy had killed the messenger. Otherwise, Tomar would have returned long since.

THEN, nearly a week after his bearer had gone, unable longer to endure the pinch of suspense, the black-bearded sea king hurled his dare-devils thru the forest, down upon the palace of the Ard-Righ like a pack of starving wolves. The Irish have always been unflinching fighters, but before the maddened fury of the Danes they were swept away like chaff before the wind. Believing utterly that to die in battle meant an entrance to Valhalla, the Vikings flung themselves upon the enemy with reckless disregard for life and limb.

Eric, standing by the turret window, watched the battle moodily. He could not lift sword against his own countrymen, even tho his own life and the safety of the girl he loved hung breathless in the balance. Many an irrelevant thought drifted thru his mind as he stood there, high above the clash and turmoil of conflict. Chief among them was his promise to wed a girl he did not love. His promise to Snowfrid was binding as the immutable heavens. There was but one way he could evade it, and that was to pluck the crown from the head of Malachy. That was impossible now.

Below him the fight raged with merciless abandon. He saw the King cut down by Thorgils' own hand, saw the Viking chief leap thru the shattered keep, and clatter up the stairway.

Eric's sword leaped from its sheath. With light-footed grace he sped down the hall and placed his broad back before Eileen's door. The brutal face of the Thunderer rose above the level of the floor, and a satiric grin twisted his lips when he saw the challenging figure of his enemy.

"Well, niddering," he sneered, using the greatest insult a Northman can give, "may I sup in h——l this night if I do not spit you on my sword like a herring, and take the beautiful Eileen to wife before the sun's edge is wet by the sea!"

Eric's smile was contemptuous, and his long weapon flashed upward in an arc of flame. "Thou may well sup there, Thorgils," he answered, "for but one of us will leave this spot alive, and the Valkyria have whispered that it is not thou."

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE THUNDERER MET HIS FATE.

THE Thunderer grinned wickedly. "Hast thou forgotten the words of the wise woman, Eric? Did she not say that I should never die at the hands of an enemy? Thus cloaked, what scath can thou do me?"

"Prophecy or no, I will sheath my sword in thy heart, thou churl," cried Eric, with a savage ring to his usually quiet voice. For an instant more they faced each other there in the dim hall, Thorgils stern and collected, Strongbow burning with eagerness and fiery resolution. Then the Thunderer slurred out a taunt, and the younger man, without answering, leaped lightly to the attack. Up and down went the long, shining blades, round and round they circled in curves of glimmering light, flashing sparks at every parry. Eric's litheness stood him in good stead now. With a slight move of his body he would avoid a terrible thrust, or, by stooping his head, allow a furious blow to pass over him.

The Thunderer's defense, too, was well nigh perfect, and only once did Strongbow's sword, swooping thru his guard, mark its brand on the rover's face. Foot by foot the determined assault pushed Thorgils back until he was forced to the open turret window.

"Hast had enough, dog?" panted Eric.

The chief showed his teeth in a grim smile, and at the same instant a powerful pair of hands clutched Strongbow about the throat, dragging him backward. As Eric strove desperately to release himself, Rael, with a bull-like roar, burst into the fight, tore the attacking Viking away, and rolled with him to the stone floor. That intervention gave Eric once more the chance to face his foe.

The Thunderer crouched to meet the attack, and then, like a mask, a horribly chalky hue overspread his features. He stiffened to his full height, fingers twitching convulsively on the hilt of his sword. For a second he stood thus, swaying slightly, and then crashed helplessly to the floor. The feathered shaft of an arrow protruded from his back.

"By the might of Thor!" cried Eric, awed by the happening, "the wise woman prophesied truly. The Thunderer has died at the hands of his own men."

Rael staggered to his feet, panting heavily, and thrust away the body of the Viking he had attacked. His eyes glowed when he saw the fallen dignity of the Thunderer. "So thou hast gone on thy way to h—l," he said hoarsely, looking down at the inanimate heap. "Were not my own eyes the judge I scarce could believe it sooth."

"My thanks to thee, Rael," cried Strongbow, holding out his hand. "Had thou not come when thou didst I would assuredly now be in Thorgils' place. As a token of my gratitude thou shalt have aught thy heart craveth. Whatever thou may ask of me that shall I grant."

"Rewards come later," said the Skaelling, gruffly. "Now we must trust to the gods and our legs to bring us safely away from here."

Their position was, indeed, a desperate one. Gathered on the plain were several thousand men, who, in spite of the admiration they held for Strongbow, would assuredly kill him if they could but find him. The resistance of the surviving Irishmen was failing, and soon the sack of the castle would begin. Between the comrades and the galleys was a long stretch of forest—

"'Tis well that all the women, saving the Princess Eileen, were sent away, else with more than her we might find the task too difficult." Strongbow spoke while he lifted the massive gold chain of authority from the neck of his dead enemy.

RAEL grunted. That strange quirk of chivalry in his master he could not comprehend. Hence, he thought it better to overlook it. The young Viking strode across thte hall to the door of the Princess' chamber, and rapped loudly. "Open thou, Eileen," he called. "It is I—Eric."

There was no reply. Again he struck the portal, and again only tife silence answered him.

A flash of fear touched Strongbow's heart. He glanced at Rael, whose hairy face was grave. Then, out came his battle-ax. Its keen edge bit into the tough wood. Under a dozen tremendous blows the door trembled, splintered and burst asunder. Over the wreck sprang the rovers, their eyes eagerly searching. The room was empty!

After his premonition Eric was not surprised. Instantly he read the evidence of Eileen's flight in the dark, forbidding entrance of a passageway at the rear of her room. Down it he bounded with reckless speed. Into the scullery he rushed—straight into the arms of an awkward, slop-shouldered caf, Linbar by name. It was a shock for them both, but before the clumsy fellow could shout, Strongbow clapped a hand across his mouth.

"Knowest thou aught of the Princess Eileen?" he demanded harshly. "Speak truly, for if thou liest once the darkness of Niffleheim shall hold thee till the Bifrost breaks."

Linbar gurgled something inarticulately, and Eric forced his mouth. "I know nothing of her," quavered the coward, "nothing save that the Thunderer hath a hundred men searching for her, and that his galley lies ever ready to bear her to Denmark, there to await his pleasure."

Linbar hesitated, stealing a frightened look at his captor's face.

"Speak!" thundered Eric. "Hath she been captured?"

Yea, lord," answered Linbar slowly.

Strongbow thrust the thrall aside, and stepped outside the castle. Then he started back, with an oath of surprise. At his feet lay Malachy, stark and wide-eyed, the crown he wore when leading his troops imbedded in the mire.

Instinctively Eric stooped toward it. That jewel-crusted headpiece meant freedom for him to love; freedom for others as well. But ere his hand touched it he drew back. He could not bring dishonor upon a brave man, and a man who had treated him with such gentle courtesy as had the King of Innis-Fail.

Reverently he lifted the body, and bore it to the state room. Then he sped back to where Rael had horses waiting. A moment later they were pounding down the slope to the forest.

At every turn, Eric Strongbow has shown his manliness, his inborn chivalry and courage. What can he do now? How will he find the beautiful girl he loves who has disappeared so strangely from his sight? This powerful story of 823 B. C. will be finished in the Ledger for July 31.

"May I Sup in H—l This Night If I Do Not Spit You on My Sword Like a Herring and Take the Beautiful Eileen to Wife!"

Needless Alarm.

BY FUNNYFACE.

"IS JIMMY home?" asked the father of the family shedding his overcoat. "I want him to help me clean the basement. Time he learned something of the duties of life."

"Hush!" said Jimmy's mother. "You mustn't disturb Jimmy. He is in the library working hard composing a story."

"Whaddoyuh mean, story?" demanded Jimmy's father. "How can a boy of 12 write a story? And why should he?"

"He is writing it for the class newspaper which they print at the end of each quarter," explained Jimmy's mother. "It is a great honor to be selected to do it, and they always pick out the one in the class with the most imagination and talent and——"

"I never heard such nonsense!" snorted Jimmy's father. "Not that I doubt Jimmy's imagination, but as for literary talent—say, that boy would get more practical good out of scientifically piling up all that kindling down stairs than he would writing a complete novel. These schools need overhauling. The idea of——"

"I wouldn't get so excited," said his wife with dignity. "For all you know this may bring out hidden genius. And if Jimmy should write a famous novel——"

"Horrors!" cried Jimmy's father. "Haven't you any motherly feeling at all for your son? Do you know what it means to be a popular novelist? People are always hunting you out to ask your favorite brand of breakfast food and want to see how you trim your hair. You are expected to be present at all the socials in your village and say one witty thing after the other without pausing for breath, and everybody who can't think of anything else to talk about comes up and begs to be told just how you compose your wonderful works.

"You have to drink tea, quarts of it, and woof these sandwiches of delicate constitutions that look like a bunch of rosebuds and have no taste whatever until you've assembled two dozen or so in your interior. If you eat heartily out at dinner they say you are gross, and if you pick at your food they say you are ethereal, and either reputation is warranted to break a man. And you either starve to death or become a millionaire.

"No, I see nothing in the fate of a popular novelist to make me wish to bring up my innocent son on that line. His press agent might make him wear embroidered velvet dressing gowns and turbans on his head, for all you know, and circulate the report that all Mr. James Finkmarton Plausdale ate while in the throes of composition was creamed bamboo roots and snails.

"Far better have Jimmy president of a large corporation, spending his time confusing Senate committees and ordering suits by the dozen, and respected wherever he went! I am going in and yank my son away from his dangerous labor and teach him the law of gravitation by means of the kindling pile."

"You will do no such thing," declared Jimmy's mother with spirit. "He's got to finish that story tonight, and it's to have his name attached, and everything, and he's real pleased. And you needn't worry. I've seen what he's writing."

"What is it about?" asked the father.

Jimmy's mother laughed.

"It begins," she replied, this way: 'Once there waz a Boy who had Six guinypigs and another boy he didn't have Any and he wudn't give him one. So, you see——' "

"Oh, well," said Jimmy's father, "I am relieved. I don't think there is any danger. I might as well pile that kindling myself. I need the exercise."

LET THEM!

LET them make our Sundays heatless,
Let them make our Mondays eatless.
Let the "less days" that they give us
Come together, fast and thick.
Let them make our Fridays fishless.
Even make our tables dishless,
Just so pay day is not payless,
We won't kick.

Crooked Trails and Straight

By William Macleod Raine

The Previous Installment.

BUCKY O'CONNOR of the Rangers, stepped in at this juncture of the game and relieved Luck of his worries. He captured Blackwell and forced him to confess his part in the robbery. He had found a letter telling of the money to be shipped by the W. & S. Express and had held up the train by himself. Fendrick had followed him and caught him; then Cass hid the satchel of money and arranged it to appear as if his enemy, Cullison, had stolen it. Shortly after confessing, Blackwell escaped from jail.

The time was drawing near for the hold-up to be staged in which Soapy and his gang hoped to be rid of young Sam. Curley, dressed in Sam's clothes and with a friend,

MALONEY, who was also eager to save Cullison's boy, took the express at 2:57, determined to teach Soapy a trick or two in plots.

This story began in No. 22, the Ledger for May 29. Back copies may be obtained from our agents or newsdealers.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HOLD-UP.

CURLY'S watch showed 10:17 when the wheels began to grind from the setting of the air brakes. He was in the last sleeper, Dick in the day coach near the front. They had agreed that Dick was to drop off as soon as the train slowed down enough to make it safe, whereas Curly would go on and play Sam's part until the proper time.

The train almost slid to a halt from the pressure of the hard-jammed brakes. A volley of shots rang out. Curly slipped the mask over his face and rose with a revolver in each hand. He had been sitting at the end of the car, so that nobody noticed him until his voice rang out with a crisp order.

"Hands up! Don't anybody move!"

An earthquake shock could not have alarmed the passengers more. The color was washed completely from the faces of most of them.

"Reach for the roof. Come, punch a hole in the sky!" To do it thoroly, Curly flung a couple of shots thru the ceiling. That was enough. Hands went up without any argument, most of them quivering as from an Arkansas chill.

Presently Cranston herded the passengers in from the forward coaches. With them were most of the train crew. The front door of the car was locked so that they could not easily get out.

"We're cutting off the express car and going forward to 'Dobe Wells with it. There we can blow open the safe uninterrupted," Bad Bill explained. "You ride herd on the passengers here from the outside till you hear two shots, then hump yourself forward and hop on the express car."

Fine! Curly was to stay there in the moonlight and let anybody in the car that had the nerve pepper away at him. If they did not attend to the job of riddling him, his false friends would do it while he was running forward to get aboard. Nothing could have been simpler—if he had not happened to have had inside information of their intent.

He had to think quickly, for the plans of him and his friends had been deranged. They had reckoned on the express car being rifled on the spot. This would have given Cullison time to reach the scene of action. Now they would be too late. Maloney, lying snug in the bear grass beside the track, would not be informed as to the arrangement. Unless Curly could stop it, the hold-up would go thru according to the program of Soapy and not of his enemies.

The decision of Fiandrau was instantaneous. He slid down beside the track into the long grass. Whipping up one of his guns, he fired. As if in answer to the first shot his revolver cracked twice. Simultaneously, he let out a cry of pain, wriggled back for a dozen yards thru the grass, and crossed the track in the darkness. As he crouched down close to the wheels of the sleeper some one came running back on the other side.

"What's up, Sam? You hit?" he could hear Blackwell whisper.

No answer came.

"Sam," he called again; then, "He's sure got his."

That was all Curly wanted to know. Softly he padded forward, keeping as low as he could till he reached the empty sleepers. A brakeman was just uncoupling the express car when Curly dived underneath and nestled close to the trucks.

From where he lay he could almost have reached out and touched Soapy standing by the car.

"What about the kid?" Stone asked Blackwell as the latter came up.

"They got him. Didn't you hear him yelp?"

"Yes, but did they put him out of business? See his body?"

Blackwell had no intention of going back into the fire zone and making sure. For his part he was satisfied. So he lied.

"Yep. Blew the top of his head off."

"Good," Soapy nodded. "That's a receipt in full for Mr. Luck Cullison."

The wheels began to move. Soon they were hitting only the high spots. Curly guessed they must be doing close to sixty miles an hour. Down where he was the dust was flying so thickly he could scarce breathe, as it usually does on an Arizona track in the middle of summer.

Before many minutes the engine began to slow down. The wheels had hardly stopped moving when Curly crept out, plowed thru the sand, up the rubble of a little hill, and into a draw where a bunch of scrub oaks offered cover.

A voice in front called to him. Just then the moon appeared from behind drifting clouds.

"Oh, it's you, Sam. Everything all right?"

"Right as the wheat. We're blowing open the safe now," Flandrau answered.

Moving closer, he saw that his questioner was the man in charge of the horses. Tho he knew the voice, he could not put a name to its owner. But this was not the point that first occupied his mind. There were only four horses for five riders! Curly knew now that he had not been mistaken. Soapy had expected one of his allies to stay on the field of battle; had prepared for it from the beginning. The knowledge of this froze any remorse the young vaquera might have felt.

HE PUSHED his revolver against the teeth of the horse wrangler.

"Don't move, you bandy-legged maverick, or I'll fill your hide full of holes. And if you want to keep on living padlock that mouth of yours."

In spite of his surprise the man caught the point at once. He turned over his weapons without a word.

Curly unwound a rope from one of the saddles and dropped a loop round the neck of his prisoner. The two men mounted and rode out of the draw, the outlaw leading the other two horses. As soon as they reached the bluff above Flandrau outlined the next step in the program.

"We'll stay here in the tornilla and see what happens, my friend. Unless you've a fancy to get lead poisoning keep still."

"Who in Mexico are you?" the captured man asked.

"It's your showdown. Skin off that mask."

The man hesitated. His own revolver moved a few inches toward his head. Hastily he took off the mask. The moon shone on the face of the man called Dutch. Flandrau laughed. Last time they met Curly had a rope around his neck. Now the situation was reversed.

An explosion below told them that the robbers had blown open the safe. Presently Soapy's voice came faintly to them.

"Bring up the horses."

He called again, and a third time. The dwarfed figures of the outlaws stood out clear in the moonlight. One of them ran up the track toward the draw. He disappeared into the scrub oaks, from whence his alarmed voice came in a minute.

"Dutch! Oh, Dutch!"

The revolver rim pressed a little harder against the bridge of the horse wrangler's nose.

"He ain't here," Blackwell called back to his accomplices.

That brought Stone on a run. "You condemned idiot, he must be there. Ain't he had two hours to get here since he left Tin Cup?"

They shouted themselves hoarse. They wandered up and down in a vain search. All the time Curly and his prisoner sat in the brush and scarcely batted an eye.

At last Soapy gave up the hunt. The engine and the express car were sent back to join the rest of the train, and as soon as they were out of sight the robbers set out across country toward the Flatiron ranch.

Curly guessed their intentions. They would rustle horses there and head for the border. It was the only chance still left them.

After they had gone Curly and his prisoner returned to the road and set out toward Tin Cup. About a mile and a half up the line they met Cullison and his riders on the way down. Maloney was with them. He had been picked up at the station.

Dick gave a shout of joy when he heard Flandrau's voice.

"Oh, you Curly! I've been scared stiff for fear they'd got you."

Luck caught the boy's hand and wrung it hard. "You plucky young idiot, you've got sand in your craw. What the deuce did you do it for?"

They held a conference while the Circle

How do you like

Bubble Grains?

Ask people what cereal they like best and most folks mention Puffed Grains.

Ask which Puffed Grain and you'll get three opinions, for each has its own delights.

Ask about ways of serving and a dozen people may favor a dozen different ways.

Millions of dishes daily

In summertime Puffed Grains have countless uses.

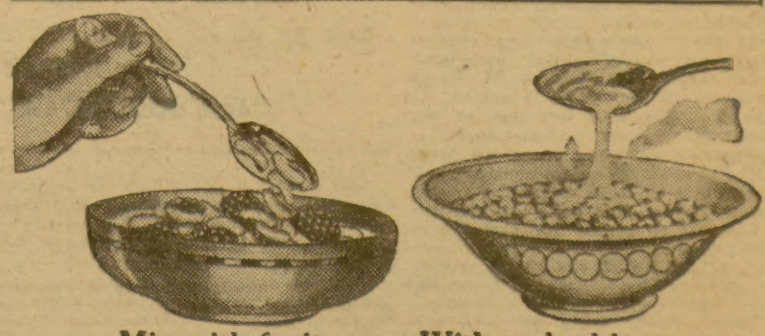
Here are bubble grains, flimsy, flavory, toasted, puffed to eight times normal size. They seem like food confections, yet two are whole grains with whole-grain nutrition.

Every food cell is exploded, so digestion is easy and complete. At any hour they form the ideal foods.

Folks serve them at breakfast, then later in the day they float them in bowls of milk. They use them like nut-meats on ice cream, as wafers in their soups.

Let children revel in them—serve in all the ways they will. But don't forget Puffed Wheat in milk—those flaky, fragile whole grains, rich in 16 elements which growing children need.

Puffed Wheat Puffed Rice
Corn Puffs
Also Puffed Rice Pancake Flour



Mix with fruits

They add what crust adds to a shortcake—an enticing blend. And the tissue walls crush at a touch.

With melted butter

Crisp and douse with melted butter for children to eat like peanuts when at play.

The Quaker Oats Company
Sole Makers

C riders handcuffed Dutch and tied him to a horse. Soon the posse was off again, having left the prisoner in charge of one of the men. They swung round in a wide half circle, not wishing to startle their game until the proper time. The horses pounded up hills, slid into washes and plowed thru sand on a Spanish trot, sometimes in the moonlight, more often in darkness. The going was rough, but they could not afford to slacken speed.

When they reached the edge of the mesa that looked down on the Flatiron the moon was out and the valley was swimming in light. They followed the dip of a road that led down to the corral. Passing the fenced lane leading to the stable, they tied their ponies inside and took the places assigned to them by Cullison.

They had not long to wait. In less than half an hour three shadowy figures slipped round the edge of the corral and up the lane. Each of them carried a rifle in addition to his hip guns.

They slid into the open end of the stable. Cullison's voice rang out coldly.

"Drop your guns!"

A startled oath, a shot, and before one could have lifted a hand that silent moonlit valley of peace had become a battlefield.

The outlaws fell back from the stable, weapons smoking furiously. Blackwell broke into a run, never looking behind him, but Soapy and Bad Bill gave back foot by foot fighting every step of the way.

Dick and Curly rose from behind the rocks where they had been placed and closed the trap on Blackwell. The paroled convict let out one yell.

"I give up. Goddlemighty, don't shoot!"

His rifle he had already thrown away. With his arms reaching above him, his terror-stricken eyes popping from his head, he was a picture of the most frightened "bad man" who had ever done business in Arizona.

HALF way down the lane Cranston was hit. He sank to his knees, and from there lopped over sideways to his left elbow. In the darkness his voice could be heard, for the firing had momentarily ceased.

"They've got me, Soapy. Run for it. I'll hold 'em back."

"Hit bad, Bill?"

"I'm all in. Vamos!"

Stone turned to run, and for the first time saw that his retreat was cut off. As fast as he could pump the lever his rifle began working again.

The firing this time did not last more than five seconds. When the smoke cleared it was all over. Soapy lay on his back, shot thru and thru. Blackwell had taken advantage of the diversion to crawl thru the strands of barbed wire and to disappear in the chaparral. Bill had rolled over on his face.

Curly crept thru the fence after the escaping man, but in that heavy undergrowth he knew it was like looking for a needle in a haystack. After a time he gave it up and returned to the field of battle.

Dick was bending over Stone. He looked up at the approach of his friend and said just one word.

"Dead."

Cullison had torn open Cranston's shirt and was examining his wounds.

"No use, Luck. I've got a-plenty. You sure fooled us thoro. Was it Sam gave us away?"

"No, Bill. Curly overheard Soapy and Blackwell at Chalkeye's Place. Sam stood pat, tho you were planning to murder him."

"I wasn't in on that, Luck—didn't know a thing about it till after the boy was shot. I wouldn't a-stood for it."

"He wasn't shot. Curly saved him. He had to give you away to do it."

"Good enough. Serves Soapy right for double-crossing Sam. Take care of that kid, Luck. He's all right yet." His eye fell on Flandrau. "You're a game sport, son. You beat us all. No hard feelings."

"Sorry it had to be this way, Bill."

The dying man was already gray to the lips, but his nerve did not falter. "It had to come some time. And it was Luck ought to have done it, too." He waved aside Sweeney, who was holding a flask to his lips. "What's the use? I've got mine."

"Shall we take him to the house?" Maloney asked.

"No, I'll die in the open. Say, there's something else, boys. Curly has been accused of that Bar Double M horse rustling back in the early summer. I did that job. He was not one of us. You hear, boys. Curly was not in it."

A quarter of an hour later he died. He had lied to save from the penitentiary the lad who had brought about his death. Curly knew why he had done it—because he felt himself to blame for the affair. Maybe Bad Bill had been a desperado, a miscreant according to the usual standard, but when it came to dying he knew how to go better than many a respectable citizen. Curly stole off into the darkness so that the boys would not see him play the baby.

By this time the men from the Flatiron were appearing, armed with such weapons as they could hastily gather. The situation was explained to them. Neighboring ranchers were called up by telephone and a systematic hunt started to capture Blackwell.

Luck left his three riders to help in the man hunt, but he returned with Curly and Maloney to Saguache. On the pommel of his saddle was a sack. It contained the loot from the express car of the Flyer. The sum total taken amounted only to one hundred ninety-four dollars and sixteen cents. Two lives already had been sacrificed to get it!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

THEY found the prodigal son with his sister and Laura London at the Del Mar. Repentance was writ large all over his face and manner. From Davis and from the girls he had heard the story of how Soapy Stone had intended to destroy him. His scheme of life had been broken into pieces and he was a badly shaken young scamp.

When Luck and Curly came into the room he jumped up, very white about the lips.

"Father!"

"My boy!"

Cullison had him by the hand, one arm around the shaking shoulders.

"What—what——?"

Sam's question broke down, but his father guessed it.

"Soapy and Bad Bill were killed. Dutch is a prisoner, and Blackwell escaped. All Spring Valley is out after him."

The boy was aghast. "My God!"

"Best thing for all of us. Soapy meant to murder you. If it hadn't been for Curly——"

"Are you sure?"

"No question about it. He brought no horse for you to ride away on. Bill admitted it, tho he didn't know what was planned. Curly heard Soapy ask Blackwell whether he had seen your body."

The boy shuddered and drew a long sobbing breath. "I've been a fool, father—and worse."

"Forget it, son. We'll wipe the slate clean. I've been to blame, too."

It was no place for outsiders. Curly beat a retreat into the next room. The young women followed him. Both of them were frankly weeping. Arms twined about each other's waists, they disappeared into an adjoining bedroom.

"Don't go," Kate called to him over her shoulder.

Curly sat down and waited. Presently Kate came back alone. Her shining eyes met his.

"I never was so happy in all my life before. Tell me what happened—everything, please."

As much as was good for her to know Curly told. Without saying a word she listened till he was thru. Then she asked a question.

"Won't Dutch tell about Sam being in it?"

"Don't matter if he does. Evidence of an accomplice not enough to convict. Soapy overshot himself. I'm here to testify that Sam and he quarreled before Sam left. Besides, Dutch won't talk. I drilled it into him thoro that he'd better take his medicine without bringing Sam in."

She sat for a long time looking out of the window without moving. She did not make the least sound, but the young man knew she was crying softly to herself. At last she spoke in a low, sweet voice.

"What can we do for you? First you save father and then Sam. You risked everything for my brother—to win him back to us, to save his life and now his reputation. If you had been killed people would always have have believed you were one of the gang."

"Sho! That's nonsense, Miss Kate." He twisted his hat in his hand uneasily. "Honest, I enjoyed every bit of it. And a fellow has to pay his debts."

"Just because a fellow—oh, shucks!"

"That's all very well for you to say, but you can't help us thinking what we please."

"But that ain't right. I don't want you thinking things that ain't so because——"

"Yes? Because——"

She lifted her eyes and met his. Then she knew it had to come out, that the feeling banked in him would overflow in words.

"Because you're the girl I love."

He had not intended to say it now, lest he might seem to be urging his services as a claim upon her. But the words had slipped out in spite of him.

She held out her two hands to him with a little gesture of surrender. The light of love was in her starry eyes.

And then—

She was in his arms, and the kisses he had dreamed about were on his lips.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CUTTING TRAIL.

KATE CULLISON had disappeared, had gone out riding one morning and at nightall had not returned. As the hours passed, anxiety at the Circle C became greater.

"Meobe she got lost," Bob suggested.

Her father scouted this as absurd. "Lost nothing. You couldn't lose her within forty miles of the ranch. She knows this country like a cow does the range. And say she was lost—all she would have to do would be to give that pinto his head and he'd hit a bee line for home. No, nor she ain't had an accident, either, unless it included the pony, too."

"You don't reckon a cougar——" began Sweeney, and stopped.

Luck looked at his bandy-legged old rider with eyes in which little cold devils sparkled. "A human cougar, I'll bet. This time I'll take his hide off inch by inch while he's still living."

"You thinking of Fendrick?" asked Sam.

"You've said it."

Sweeney, considered rasping his stubbly chin. "I don't reckon Cass would do Miss Kate a meanness. He's a white man, say the worst of him. But it might be Blackwell. When last seen he was heading into the hills. If he met her——"

A spasm of pain shot across Luck's face. "My God! That would be awful."

"By Gum, there he is now, Luck." Sweeney's finger pointed to an advancing rider.

Cullison swung as on a pivot in time to see some one drop into the dip in the road, just beyond the corral. "Who—Blackwell?"

"No. Cass."

Fendrick reappeared presently and turned in at the lane. Cullison, standing on the porch at the head of the steps looked like a man who was passing thru the inferno. But he looked too a personified day of judgment untempered by mercy. His eyes bored like steel gimlets into those of his enemy.

The sheepman spoke, looking straight at his foe. "I've just heard the news. I was down at Yesler's ranch when you phoned asking if they had seen anything of Miss Cullison. I came up to ask you one question. When was she seen last?"

"About 10 o'clock this morning. Why?"

"I saw her about noon. She was on Mesa Verde, headed for Blue Canyon looked like."

"Close enough to speak to her?" Sam asked.

"Yes. We passed the time of day."

"And then?" Luck cut back into the conversation with a voice like a file.

"She went on toward the gulch and I kept on to the ranch. The last I saw of her she was going straight on."

"And you haven't seen her since?"

The manner of the questioner startled Fendrick. "God, man, you don't think I'm in this, do you?"

"If you are you'd better blow your brains out before I learn it. And if you're trying to lead me on a false scent——" Luck stopped. Words failed him, but his iron jaw clamped like a vice.

Fendrick spoke quietly. "I'm willing. In the meantime we'd better travel over toward Mesa Verde, so as to be ready to start at daybreak."

Cullison's gaze had never left him. It observed, weighed, appraised. "Good enough. We'll start."

He left Sweeney to answer the telephone while he was away. All of his other riders were already out combing the hills under supervision of Curly. Luck had waited with Sam only to get some definite information before starting. Now he had his lead. Fendrick was either telling the truth or he was lying with some sinister purpose in view. The cattleman meant to know which.

Morning breaks early in Arizona. By the time they had come to the spot where the sheepman said he had met Kate gray streaks were already lightening the sky. The party moved forward slowly toward the canyon, spreading out so as to cover as much ground as possible. Before they reached its mouth the darkness had lifted enough to show the track of a horse in the sand.

They pushed up the gulch as rapidly as they could. The ashes of a camp fire halted them a few minutes later. Scat-

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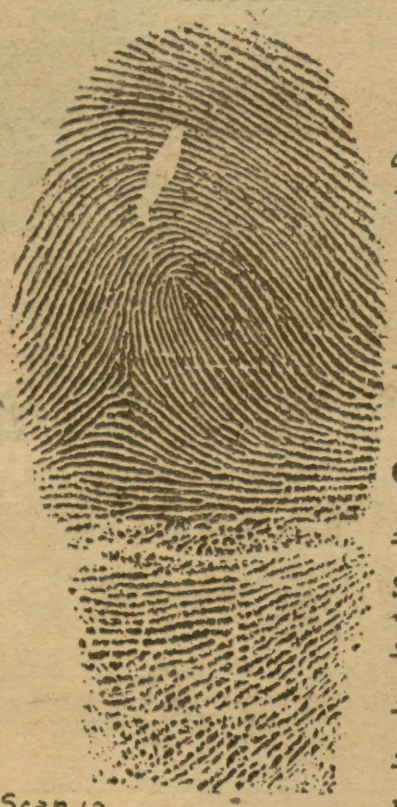

(Name) John J. Corp

(alias) "London Johnny Corp"

(alias) "Frederick J. Ashton"

(alias) "Hempfield Carruthers"

BORN London-England. April-4-1879

OPERATES AS Sneakthief, Confidence man, Bankrobber, Burglar.

SENTENCES Kensington Jail, England-1896..2 Years. SAN QUENTIN, 1900..5 Years. Joliet, 1907..3 Years. Sing Sing, 1912..7 Years.

LAST HEARD OF See Toronto files-pg. 4962 See Toledo files-pg-7921 See San Francisco files-pg-2913.

Scar 13 "lines" long. (Enlargement) 2 (Right) X (Left)

NOTES: Died by drowning, City of Ottumwa disaster. Chicago. May 15, 1920. Body identified by Inspector Josman Sheffield. Fingerprints identified by same. K.

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tered about lay the feathers and dismembered bones of some birds.

Cass stooped and picked up some of the feathers. "Quails, I reckon. Miss Cullison had three tied to her saddle horn when I met her."

"Why did she come up here to cook them?" Sam asked.

Luck was already off his horse, quartering over the ground to read what it might tell him.

"She wasn't alone. There was a man with her. See these tracks."

It was Fendrick who made the next discovery. He had followed a draw for a short distance and climbed to a little mesa above. Presently he called to Cullison.

Father and son hurried toward him. The sheepowner was standing at the edge of a prospect hole pointing down with his finger.

"Some one has been in that pit recently, and he's been there several days."

"THEN how did he get out?" Sam asked.

Fendrick knelt on the edge of the pit and showed him where a rope had been dragged so heavily that it had cut deeply into the clay.

"Some one pulled him out."

"What's it mean anyhow? Kate wasn't in that hole, was she?"

Cass shook his head. "This is my guess. Some one was coming along here in the dark and fell in. Suppose Miss Cullison heard him calling as she came up the gulch. What would she do?"

"Come up and help the fellow out."

"Sure she would. And if he was hungry—as he likely was—she would cook her quail for him."

"And then? Why didn't she come home?"

Luck turned a gray agonized face on him. "Boy, don't you see? The man was Blackwell."

"And if you'll put yourself in Blackwell's place you'll see that he couldn't let her go home to tell where she had seen him," Fendrick explained.

"Then where is she? What did he do with her?"

There came a moment's heavy silence. The pale face of the boy turned from the sheepman to his father. "You don't think that—that——"

"No, I don't," Cass answered. "But let's look this thing squarely in the face. There were three things he could do with her. First, he might leave her in the pit. He didn't do that because he hadn't the nerve. She might be found soon and set the hunters on his track. Or she might die in that hole and he be captured later with her pinto. I know him. He always plays a waiting game when he can. Takes no chances if he can help it."

"You think he took her with him, then?" Luck asked.

"Yes. There's a third possibility. He may have shot her when he got a good chance, but I don't think so. He would keep her for a hostage as long as he could."

"That's the way I figure it," agreed Cullison. "He daren't hurt her, for he would know Arizona would hunt him down like a wolf if he did."

"Then where's he taken her?" Sam asked.

"Somewhere into the hills. He knows every pocket of them. His idea will be to slip down and cut across the line into Sonora. He's a rotten bad lot, but he won't do her any harm unless he's pushed to the wall. The fear of Luck Cullison is in his heart."

"That's about it," nodded Luck. "He's somewhere in these hills unless he's broken thru. Bolt phoned me that one of his posse came on the ashes of a camp fire still warm. They're closing in on him. He's got to get food or starve, unless he can break thru."

"There's a chance he'll make for one of my sheep camps to lay in a supply. Wouldn't it be a good idea to keep a man stationed at each of them?"

"You're talking sense," Cullison approved. "Sam, ride back and get in touch with Curly. Tell him to do that. And rouse the whole country over the wire. We'll run him down and feed him to the coyotes."

CHAPTER XXV.

A GOOD SAMARITAN.

FENDRICK had told the exact truth. After leaving him Kate had ridden forward to the canyon and entered it. She did not mean to go much farther, but she took her time. More than once she slipped from under a fold of her waist a letter and re-read sentences of it. Whenever she did this her eyes smiled. For it was a love letter from Curly, the first she had ever had. It had been lying on the inner edge of the threshold of her bedroom door that morning when she got up, and she knew that her lover had risen early to put it there unnoticed.

They were to be married soon. Curly had wished to wait till after his trial but she had overruled him. Both her father and Sam had sided with her, for she had made them both see what an advantage it would be with a jury for Flandrau to have his bride sitting beside him in the courtroom.

Faintly there came to her a windswept sound. She pulled up and waited but no repetition of it reached her ears. But before her pony and moved a dozen steps she stopped him again. This time she was almost sure of a far cry, and after it the bark of a revolver.

With the touch of a rein she guided her horse toward the sound. It might mean nothing. On the other hand it might be a call for help. Her shout brought an answer which guided her to the edge of a prospect hole. In the darkness she made out an indistinct figure.

"Water," a husky voice demanded.

She got her canteen from the saddle and dropped it to him. The man glued his lips to the mouth as if he could never get enough.

"For God's sake get me out of here," he pleaded, piteously.

"How long have you been there?"

"Two days. I fell in at night whilst I was cutting across country."

Kate fastened her rope to the horn of the saddle, tightened the cinch carefully, and dropped the other end to him. She swung to the back of the horse and braced herself by resting her full weight on the farther stirrup.

"Now," she told him.

The imprisoned man tried to pull himself up, bracing his feet against the rough projections of the rock wall to help him. But he could not manage the climb. At last he gave it up with an oath.

"We'll try another way," the girl told him cheerfully with pleasant smile.

At spaces about a foot distant she tied knots in the rope for about the first six feet.

"This time you'll make it," she promised. "You can get up part way as you did before. Then I'll start my horse forward. Keep braced out from the wall, so as not to get crushed."

He growled an assent. Once more she got into the saddle and gave the word. He dragged himself up a few feet and then the cowpony moved forward. The legs of the man doubled up under the strain and he was crushed against the wall just as he reached the top. However, he managed to hang on and was dragged over the edge with one cheek scratched and bleeding.

"Might a-known you'd hurt me if you moved so fast," he complained, nursing his wounded face in such a way as to hide it.

"I'm sorry. I did my best to go carefully," the girl answered, stepping forward.

His hand shot forward and caught her wrist. Her startled eyes flashed to his face. The man was the convict, Blackwell.

"Got anything to eat with you. I'm starving," he snapped.

"Yes. I shot some quail. Let go my

(Continued on Page 15.)

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THIN ICE

(Continued From Page 4)

upon Dr. Hallam, tho he stood with one hand raised to his peering eyes, intently watching the receding figures of Powers and his horse. Startled by a faint sound behind him he turned quickly and faced —Nancy.

She had reached the black cavity in the washout slightly in advance of him, and knowing that a horseman was behind her she had hidden in it. From the darkness of such a retreat she had heard every word that was spoken. The feelings they aroused were expressed in her appearance as she stood before him, pale, imperious, scornful.

"You here!" he exclaimed with a gasp of astonishment.

"Yes," she said, and stepped a few feet nearer.

He stood irresolute, actually afraid for the first time since embarking upon the sinuous path—afraid of the girl whose face seemed never lovelier than then, when the golden beams of the moon fell softly upon its accusing lines. He was afraid to lie and afraid to tell the truth. A moment he waited in silence, then lifted his eyes from their downward cast. The spirit of defiance had faded from them.

"Do you believe what he said?" he asked her.

"How can I help it?"

"But he is a scoundrel, a blackmailer, who is trying to extort money from me."

She made an impatient gesture. "I know that he is a blackmailer, but he says that you are an impostor—that you have cheated the Hamilton estate out of ninety thousand dollars. Is it true?"

"I am surprised that you ask. Are you so quick to believe ill of me?"

"I don't want to, but you must answer. Who are you?"

"I can see it in your face," he cried. "You are going to turn against me. Nancy! Nancy! Oh, my dear——"

His startled cry and the look which came over his face frightened her—they appeared so much like the plea of a guilty man. Her head drooped and she pressed both hands upon her burning cheeks.

"And to think that I came near running away with you," she said in a voice which scarcely reached him.

"You never loved me," he reproached her, "or you would not be so quick to condemn me. I do not think it would matter what I say; you would believe the other thing."

"I would not!" she cried. "I want to believe in you, but—dear God: can't you see how it's all—chaos? I don't want to be deceived. Please, please tell me the truth!"

"Dear Nancy, listen," he said, and stepping nearer he took hold of her hand, but she drew away. With the flush of appeal still lingering in her eyes she determinedly stepped to one side and waited for him to answer.

He hesitated. The words which first came to his lips refused utterance. The lie he had framed to induce her to run away with him remained unspoken. He could not speak it. A deliberate untruth at such a moment, it seemed, would take from their love its chiefest support—unshattered faith. In that instant irresolution faded.

"Can you forgive me?" he asked.

She continued silent.

"Don't you love me?" he persisted.

Her eyes flashed with something of contempt. "Quit dodging!" she cried. "Tell me the truth. Are you Henry Hamilton?"

"No."

APPALLING silence was heightened by the darkness. For a moment they stood speechless, each conscious that a crippled personality was trying to hide its pain in the desolate shadows of the jagged rocks about them. She moved. Misunderstanding her intention, he entered a passionate plea for mercy.

"Listen," he cried. "Let me tell you how I came to do it."

She shook his fingers from her arm as tho they stung her. "There is nothing more to say," she whispered huskily. "There is no need to explain."

"Do you mean that a mere confession is sufficient?"

"Oughtn't it to be?"

"No, it should not," he cried with passion. "The cause had its inception before I met you. Its progress afterwards became unavoidable, but it has never affected my love for you and I do not see why it should. I ought to be given the right to explain. You owe something to me at least."

She looked at him with astonishment. "Yes," she said, "I owe you the crowning disappointment of life. I owe you the greatest shame I hope ever to know. I owe to you the knowledge that I love an impostor, a rogue, a——"

"Finish it! A rogue, an impostor, a thief. Anything else?"

"A deceiver," she said.

"That is not true. You know it is not. You know that I never deliberately deceived you."

She arched her brows.

"No," he maintained, "I did not. I met you after the deception started. I simply did not undeceive you of the popular belief. It is the only regret I have—that I did not know you before the temptation came, that I did not have your love to keep me from yielding to it."

She laughed. "You are altogether too plausible. I am very thankful to say that I have sufficient sense to put two and two together."

"What do you mean by that?"

"That your attitude for deception is something to be guarded against. You successfully deceived every one here, and you deceived me, no matter what you may say to the contrary."

"But I love you."

She looked incredulous. "Cheating love," she mocked, and he drew back, sensitive to the hurt she had given him.

"If you feel that way then you never loved me," he said, "And I see that your faith is narrow and limited. Can't you see that what I have done has nothing to do with you? Think! Remember! Can you recall an incident where I failed in devotion or faith? And let me tell you that but for love of you I would have been away from here long ago. What has kept me, do you think, until this moment of exposure—but to take you with me?"

"You are flattering. But I haven't any wish for a life of crime."

"Nor I for you to live such a life. From the moment we leave here wrong doing will end."

"Then you will give up the money."

He remained silent. His face after a moment grew hard and stern. "I will not," he finally said. "I will take all that I have risked and dared to win."

"Even tho you lose me?"

"Even tho I lose you. But I will not lose you, for you are going with me."

She laughed mockingly. "With a self-confessed thief! Really, you do me too much honor."

He stepped to one side. "I don't want you. You may return home."

A startled light leaped to her eyes. She had not expected quite so much independence. "Good-by," she said, and turned slowly away.

Moved by sudden passion he sprang after her and before she could repel him he seized her in his arms and pressed kiss after kiss upon her lips. Then he left her without so much as a backward glance.

Quivering with emotion Nancy sat down upon rock and wept—torn by the mind's conception of honor and the call of the heart for its mate.

Sunday morning dawned clear and warm and Dr. Hallam had not been to bed. He sat in the doorway of his cabin thruout the night, grimly silent, smoking, smoking, smoking, trying to decide what he ought to do—or, rather, what he could force himself to do. The instinct of self-preservation bade him to leave without delay. Hope held him chained to the spot with his eyes like the lead to the magnet, turned ever to the Maynard home.

After a time he got up and went into the cabin. He sat down at a table and wrote feverishly for several seconds, then putting the letter he had written into an envelope he addressed it to Nancy. He placed it in the pocket of his coat, went to the door and scanned the surrounding country, and then threw himself at full length upon the bed. An instant later he was sound asleep.

In the meantime the sun grew higher and warmer. Upon the streets of the town miners and workingmen paraded in Sunday attire. Some of the stores were open, among them Pap Maynard's. Within its rear office sat Powers. Gilmore, Lawyer Lyons, and several citizens of more or less prominence. Powers was addressing them. He was making a clear, concise statement of Dr. Hallam's impersonation of Henry Hamilton, and so effectively that it was decided to send for the prosecuting attorney. But that gentleman, when Powers repeated the story to him, was loath to act upon the intangible evidence presented.

He did not considerer the submission of a certificate to show that Henry Hamilton had served three years in prison as proof that the present representative was not Hamilton. Nor was it sufficient that a man resembling him died in Eugene, Ore., under circumstances which led to a suspicion that he was not the man under whose name he had been buried. Something more direct, he said, would have to be shown. He offered the

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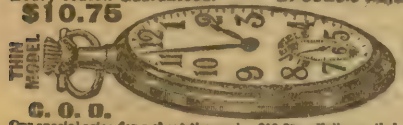

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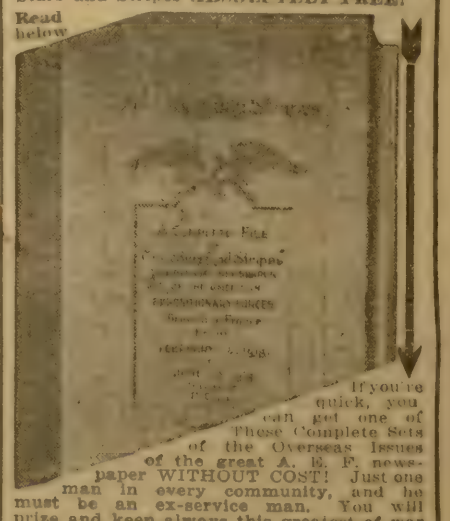

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suggestion that if it could be proved that Henry Hamilton did not have a red birthmark on his left breast, and that the man on the hill who claimed to be he did have such a mark, he would then consider that to be sufficient warrant for his arrest.

"You can't do it," cried Maynard, "unless you tear his clothes off. Ain't there some other way to make him prove he's himself?"

The prosecutor laughed. "There was once," he said—"when he applied for possession of the estate. But after the court has made a record of its recognition of him as Henry Hamilton we cannot set it aside on mere suspicion. A mere demand for proof of something already proved will not avail."

"I will tell you what we could do," cried Powers. "We could arrest him for something else—something criminal, for instance—and find out by searching him if he has such a mark upon his breast."

The prosecuting attorney abruptly arose from the table. "I cannot be a party to a trumped-up charge," he declared. "If you will give me tangible evidence upon which to base a complaint I will arrest him as an impostor. I will leave you to discuss it."

The discussion lasted during the forenoon. At its conclusion an arrangement was made to have Dr. Hallam arrested for theft—for stealing the photograph of Nancy Maynard from Pap Maynard's store. That would serve as an excuse for a close search of his person. With reason blinded by passionate hatred Maynard was willing to lend his daughter to unenviable notoriety. But—

Their scheming was likely to go astray, since Dr. Hallam had finally decided to leave that night, with or without Nancy. Even as Powers and Gilmore hung about the streets spreading their seeds of prejudice, he skirted the town and delivered his letter to John, the Chinaman, in his shack upon the outskirts. It was then late in the afternoon. John was to bring an answer to him if there was one. He was not to come near his cabin if there was not.

FEELING that whatever else betide he would be rid of the community within a few hours, Dr. Hallam leisurely rode thru the camp for the last time. He hitched his horse between the drug store and the postoffice and went into the latter to see if there was any mail in his box. When he came out he was astonished to see Gilmore, Powers and several other men grouped about his horse. Gilmore was fumbling with the girth. He strode up to him and pushed him away.

"What are you doing here?" he said.

Gilmore glared. "None of your durned business."

The girth had been loosened. Without comment Dr. Hallam tightened it and was in the act of mounting his horse when his eyes chanced upon Nancy looking at him thru the glass door of the drug store. A queer expression came over his face. He stood hesitant, palpably irresolute as to whether or not to approach her.

Some one snickered. Then Gilmore laughed in a loud, boisterous way. "'Feared, are you?" he cried. "'Feared Pap Maynard will see you!"

Dr. Hallam glared at the baiting bully. He turned again to mount his horse. Then one of the other men spoke. "Nancy's little boy," he sneered. And to Dr. Hallam's astonishment a lighted cigar flashed warmly close to his face.

He paused, one hand upon the pommel of the saddle, deadly anger gathering in his heart. His muscles hardened and every fiber of his being lusted for battle—but dared he at the last moment take the chance? The critical, watching men mistook his hesitation. One of them spoke loudly—"He's a coward!"

Dr. Hallam turned like a flash.

"Kinder stings, don't it?" sneered Gilmore. "But never mind, bub—I mean pup—git on your horse and go. It might hurt Nancy's feelings if somebody should spank you."

Dr. Hallam's pallor increased. Deliberately, calmly, he tied his horse and stepped towards the group. "Men," he said, pointing to Gilmore, "that bully has been taunting me for a long time. He thinks that I am afraid of him. He thinks that you will protect his cowardly skin if I get the best of him. Now you like a square deal, don't you? Good! All I ask is for you to give me half a chance. Do not double-cross me, and do not let any one else do so. Will you treat me right?"

A brawny miner not of the Power's element, stepped to the front. "I don't know anything about this deal, Henry," he said, "but you sure have to fight. I'll see there ain't no two to one."

DR. HALLAM pulled off his coat and vest. He walked up to Gilmore and slapped him in the face.

Gilmore stood petrified with astonishment, then with a roar like that of a savage bull he dashed at Dr. Hallam as tho he would trample him to the earth. He was far the heavier and appeared to have strength, but he was not a match for wariness and skill. His furious blows were ineffectual, and the lighter, lither man hurled upon his face cracks as sharp and as quick as the click of a

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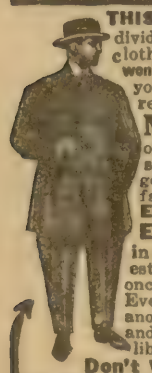

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bullet. Not liking the punishment he was receiving, and the gibes of even his own comrades, Gilmore managed to rush within Dr. Hallam's guard and to seize hold of him. Counteracting the strength of the bully with agility Dr. Hallam held to his feet. As Gilmore's long arms crept slowly about his body he suddenly squirmed out of his grasp and with a short arm blow he sent him reeling to one side—not, however, until Gilmore had torn his shirt apart and left it hanging about his naked body in shreds.

As they stood panting, each narrowly watching the other, Gilmore's eyes dilated, the lust of battle faded from them, and with a finger of fate he pointed at Dr. Hallam's breast. "Look!" he cried. "See it! See the mark!"

But few of the men understood what he meant.

Powers quickly took advantage of the situation. "That man is an impostor," he exclaimed. "He is Dr. Hedrick Hallam wanted in the State of Washington for murder."

The charge was too sudden; it was too swift for immediate effect. Before any one other than Gilmore had time to grasp the full meaning Dr. Hallam recovered from his surprise. He turned to the others with a laugh of easy indifference, and addressed himself to the big miner. "Licked fair and square," he said, "yet he isn't satisfied. He wants to turn you against me with a lie. I call that low-down."

"It is," the big man cried. "It won't go."

For a moment the group of men were made to believe the charge was a subterfuge for revenge.

Hallam put on his coat and vest to hide the telltale mark.

Powers was the first to recover his wits. "It is not a lie," he shouted. "I have told you the truth. I pledge you my word that the prosecuting attorney knows about it. The man standing there is an impostor. Do not let him get away."

Dr. Hallam drew a revolver from his coat pocket and turned to Powers with a calm that sent a chill down the blackmailer's back. "You ought to be killed," he said. "You have lied enough to justify my doing it. And by the eternal—" his face flamed with anger—"you had better not say another word."

Powers was frightened; and Gilmore, cowed by prowess based on resolution, stood passive as Dr. Hallam swung himself into the saddle. From that vantage ground he yielded to a spirit of reckless daring. He turned a broadside of sarcasm upon Powers and Gilmore that made them wince. Then, disdaining the possibility of a shot in the back, he turned his horse and slowly cantered out of town.

THE end had come. The deciding act was played. There remained but a question of time—a very short time—before the sheriff would be after him. Yet his movements were deliberate. Even when he reached his cabin he appeared to be in no particular haste. First he fed his horse and dog, then luched himself. He prepared heavy food supplies which he placed in a roll of blankets and tied about his waist, leaned his rifle against the cabin by the doorstep, and sat down upon a campstool to watch and wait—to wait for Nancy's answer and the darkness to hide his flight.

The time had come which forbade flirting with danger. Dallying even as long as he had was contrary to the voice of caution which whispered that at any moment the hill might be surrounded and his avenue of escape cut off.

Uneasily he got up from his seat and swept the surrounding country with his glass. Beyond the desultory movement of people on the streets of the town he could see no living human—and the Chinaman with Nancy's answer was conspicuously absent. As the hours lengthened and the first shadows of eventide crept over the hills he knew that she was not going to answer, that she had renounced him, that he had lingered in the pale of prison walls for a dream.

He sighed and sat down again in the gloaming, seeking to persuade himself that she was not of a spirit to ultimately sustain him, that her love was weak and lacking in courage, that if she were not of the stuff to cling to the man she loved in weal or woe before marriage, she would be weak enough to desert him afterwards, and that after all it was well she had been put to the test before it was too late. Yet in despite of that unconsoling sophistry his heart yearned for her with tender longing. Fancy brought him her image, made softer, lovlier by the dusky glow of the receding sun. It evoked beautiful memories and transported him for the moment to a different sphere—for he was, in despite of his criminal career and the vein of hardness it developed, a romanticist. He loved love for love's sake, and he saw in Nancy all the guises of feminine witchery, all the allurements of girlish innocence, of maidenly reserve, of womanly confidence, but alas! he let fall the mirror and smashed it in his remembrance of her renunciation. He could not forget that she had turned upon him in his

(Continued on Page 20.)

Blood of Breathitt

(Continued From Page 6.)

now. I quit bein' deputy afore I left Jackson town this mornin'. I wanted to be free to handle ye man to man.

"Now, Bulger Webb, ye git outen these parts." He pointed to the gate. "Git out quick. Thar's the road; take hit. "Git!"

Alvin watched him until he was out of sight. Then he went toward the cabin. Nettie stood erect in the doorway, her slender young body silhouetted against the dim glow. He silently laid the rolled uniform at her feet.

"I'm sorry hit had to happen." He stooped and picked up his hat from the bench. "I'm pow'ful sorry hit happened, Nettie, if ye reely keered fer him. 'Deed I am."

He put on his hat, his shoulders drooping with sudden weariness, and turned away into the night.

"Alvin!"

His feet beat an irregular tattoo along the rutted trail, growing fainter.

"Alvin!"

A whip-poor-will sent a mocking answer from the mountainside.

"Alvin, I want you! Come back, Alvin!"

The footfalls ceased, then became more distinct as they slowly re-approached the cabin.

"Yer victuals is almost col', Alvin. What do ye mean by runnin' off that a-way?"

A dry sob came from just outside the circle of light near the gate.

"Don't go talkin' like that ag'in, Nettie. Ye knows better. Ye've got larnin'——"

She went forward to meet him. "Larnin' don't count fer nothin' if it makes my heart go lonesome. Alvin, air ye goin' to 'low a pile o' school books to stand twixt me'n bein' happy? Air ye, Alvin?"

His hand trembled with the pressure of her firm, warm fingers; his shoulders straightened, and there was a smile on his lips as she led him into the cabin.

* * *

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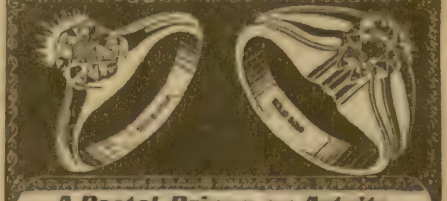

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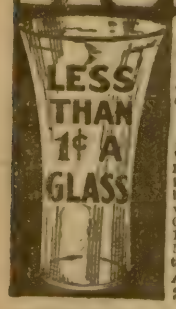

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Crooked Trails and Straight

(Continued From Page 11.)

hand."

He laughed evilly, without mirth. "Don't try any of your sissy ways on me. By God, I'm a wolf on the howl."

In spite of her supple slenderness there was strength in her small wrists. She fought and twisted till she was worn out in her efforts to free herself. Panting, she faced him.

"Let me go, I tell you."

For answer his open hand struck her mouth. "Not till you learn your boss. Before I'm thru with you a squaw won't be half so tame as you."

He dragged her to the horse, took from its case the rifle that hung by the saddle, and flung her from him roughly. Then he pulled himself to the saddle.

"March ahead of me," he ordered.

As soon as they had reached the bed of the canyon he called a halt and bade her light a fire and cook him the quail. She gathered ironwood and catclaw while he watched her vigilantly. Together they roasted the birds by holding them over the fire with sharpened sticks thrust thru the wings. He devoured them with the voracity of a wild beast.

HITHERTO his mind had been busy with the immediate present, but now his furtive, shifting gaze rested on her more thoughtfully. It was as a factor of his safety that he considered her. Gratitude was a feeling not within his scope. The man's mind worked just as Fendrick had surmised. He would not let her go back to the ranch with the news that he was hidden in the hills so close at hand. He dared not leave her in the prospect hole. He was not yet ready to do murder for fear of punishment. That was a possibility to be considered only if he should be hard pressed. The only alternative left him was to take her to the border as a companion of his fugitive doublings.

"We'll be going now," he announced, after he had eaten.

"Going where? Don't you see I'll be a drag to you? Take my horse and go. You'll get along faster."

"Do you think so?"

She opened her lips to answer, but there was something in his face—something at once so cruel and deadly wolfish—that made the words die on her lips. For the first time it came to her that if he did not take her with him he would kill her to insure his own safety. None of the arguments that would have availed with another man were of any weight here. Her sex, her youth, the service she had done him—these would not count a straw. He was lost to all the instincts of honor that govern even hard, desperate men of his class.

They struck into the mountains, following a cattle trail that wound upward with devious twists. The man rode, and the girl walked in front with the elastic lightness, the unconscious flexuous grace of poise given her body by an outdoor life. After a time they left the gulch. Steadily they traveled, up dark arroyos bristling with mesquite, across little valleys leading into timbered stretches thru which broken limbs and uprooted trees made progress almost impossible, following always untrodden ways that appalled with their lonely desolation.

By dusk they were up in the headwaters of the creeks. The resilient muscles of the girl had lost their spring. She moved wearily, her feet dragging heavily so that sometimes she staggered when the ground was rough. Not once had the man offered her the horse. He meant to be fresh, ready for any emergency that might come. Moreover, it pleased his small soul to see the daughter of Luck Cullison fagged and exhausted, but still answering the spur of his urge.

The moon was up before they came upon a tent shining in the cold, silvery light. Beside it was a sheetiron stove, a box, the ashes of a camp fire, and a side of bacon hanging from the limb of a stunted pine. Cautiously they stole forward.

The camp was for the time deserted. No doubt its owner, a Mexican sheepherder in the employ of Fendrick and Dominguez, was out somewhere with his flock.

Kate cooked a meal and the convict ate. The girl was too tired and anxious to care for food, but she made herself take a little. They packed the saddlebags with bacon, beans, coffee and flour. Blackwell tightened again the cinches and once more the two took the trail.

They made camp in a pocket opening from a gulch far up in the hills. With her own reata he fastened her hands behind her and tied the girl securely to the twisted trunk of a Joshua tree. To make sure of her he lay on the rope, both hands clinched to the rifle. In five minutes he was asleep, but it was long before Kate could escape from wakefulness. She was anxious, her nerves were jumpy, and the muscles of her arms and shoulders were cramped. At last she fell into troubled catnaps.

From one of these she awoke to see that the morning light was sifting thru

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the darkness. Her bones and muscles ached from the constraint of the position in which the rope held them. She was shivering with the chill of an Arizona mountain night. Turning her body, the girl's eyes fell upon her captor. He was looking at her in the way that no decent man looks at a woman. Her impulse was to scream, to struggle to her feet and run. What did he mean? What was he going to do?

But something warned her this would precipitate the danger. She called upon her courage and tried to still the fearful tumult in her heart. Somehow she succeeded. A scornful, confident pride flashed from her eyes into his. It told him that for his life he dared not lay a finger upon her in the way of harm. And he knew it was true, knew that if he gave way to his desire no hole under Heaven would be deep enough to hide him from the vengeance of her friends.

He got sullenly to his feet. "Come. We'll be going."

Within the hour they saw some of his hunters. The two were sweeping around the lip of a mountain park nestling among the summits. A wisp of smoke rose from the basin below. Grouped about it were three men eating breakfast.

"Don't make a sound," warned Blackwell.

His rifle covered her. With all her soul she longed to cry for help. But she dared not take the risk. Even as the two on the edge of the bowl withdrew from sight one of the campers rose and sauntered to a little grove where the ponies were tethered. The distance was too far to make sure, but something in the gait made the girl sure that the man was Curly. Her hands went out to him in a piteous little gesture of appeal.

She was right. It was Curly. He was thinking of her at that moment despairingly, but no bell of warning rang within to tell him she was so near and in such fearful need of him.

TWICE during the morning did the refugee attempt to slip down into the parched desert that stretched toward Sonora and safety. But the cordon set about him was drawn too close. Each time a loose-seated rider lounging in the saddle with a rifle in his hands drove them back. The second attempt was almost disastrous, for the convict was seen. The hum of a bullet whistled past his ears as he and his prisoner drew back into the chaparral and from thence won back to cover.

Kate, drooping with fatigue, saw that fear rode Blackwell heavily. He was trapped and he knew that by the Arizona code his life was forfeit and would be exacted of him should he be taken. He had not the hardihood to game it out in silence, but whined complaints, promises and threats. He tried to curry favor with her, to work upon her pity, even while his furtive glances told her that he was wondering whether he would have a better chance if he sacrificed her life.

From gulch to arroyo, from rock-cover to pine-clad hillside he was driven in his attempts to break the narrowing circle of grim hunters that hemmed him. And with each failure, with every passing hour, the terror in him mounted. He would have welcomed life imprisonment, would have sold the last vestige of manhood to save the worthless life that would soon be snuffed out unless he could evade his hunters till night and in the darkness break thru the line.

He knew that it had been a fatal mistake to bring the girl with him. He might have evaded Bolt's posses, but now every man within fifty miles was on the lookout for him. His rage turned against Kate because of it. Yet even in those black outbursts he felt that he must cling to her as his only hope of saving himself. He had made another mistake in lighting a campfire during the morning. Any fool ought to have known that the smoke would draw his hunters as the smell of carrion does a buzzard.

Now he made a third error. Doubling back over an open stretch of hillside, he was seen again and forced into the first pocket that opened. It proved to be a blind gulch, one offering no exit at the upper end, but a stiff climb to a bluff above.

He whipped off his coat and gave it to Kate.

"Put it on. Quick!"

Surprised, she slipped it on.

"Now ride back out and cut along the edge of the hill. You've got time to make it all right before they close in if you travel fast. Stop once—just once—and I'll drop you in your tracks. Now git!"

She saw his object in a flash. Wearing his gray felt hat and his coat, the pursuers would mistake her for him. They would follow her—perhaps snoot her down. Anyhow, it would be a diversion to draw them from him. Meanwhile he would climb the cliff and slip away unnoticed.

The danger of what she had to do stood out quite clearly, but as a chance to get away from him she welcomed it gladly. She swung the pony with a touch of the rein and set him instantly at the canter. It was rough going, but she took it almost blindly.

From the lip of the gulch she swung abruptly to the right. Her horse stumbled and went down just as a bullet flew over her head. Before she was free of the stirrups strong hands pinned her shoulders to the ground. She heard a glad startled cry. The rough hands became immediately gentle. Then things grew black. The last she remembered was that the mountains were dancing up and down in an odd fashion.

Her eyes opened to see Curly. She was in his arms and his face was broken with emotions of love and tenderness.

"You're not hurt?" he implored.

"No."

"He didn't—mistreat you?" His voice was trembling as he whispered it.

"No—no!"

And at that she broke down. A deep sob shook her body—and another. She buried her head on his shoulder and wept.

* * * * * * *

WITHOUT losing an instant the convict set himself at the climb. His haste, the swift glances shot behind him, the appalling dread that made his nerves ragged, delayed his speed by dissipating the singleness of his energy. His face and hands were torn with catclaw, his knee bruised by a slip against a sharp jut of quartz.

When he reached the top he was panting and shaken. Before he had moved a dozen steps a man came out of the brush scarce seventy-five yards away and called to him to surrender. He flung his rifle to place and fired twice.

The man staggered and steadied himself. A shell had jammed and Blackwell could not throw it out. He turned to run as the other fired. But he was too late. He stumbled, tripped and went down full length.

The man that had shot him waited for him to rise. The convict did not move. Cautiously the wounded hunter came forward, his eyes never lifting from the inert sprawling figure. Even now he half expected him to spring up, life and energy in every tense muscle. Not till he stood over him, till he saw the carelessly flung limbs, the uncouth twist to the neck, could he believe that so light a crook of the finger had sent swift death across the plateau.

The wounded man felt suddenly sick. Leaning against a rock, he steadied himself till the nausea was past. Voices called to him from the plain below. He answered, and presently circled down into the gulch which led to the open.

At the gulch mouth he came on a little group of people. One glance told him all he needed to know. Kate Cullison was crying in the arms of Curly Flandrau. Simultaneously a man galloped up, flung himself from his horse,

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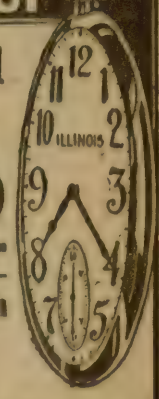

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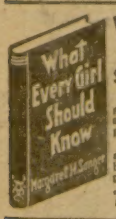

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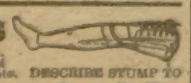

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and took the young woman from her lover.

"My little girl," he cried in a voice that rang with love.

Luck had found his ewe lamb that was lost.

It was Curly who first saw the man approaching from the gulch. "Hello, Cass! Did you get him?"

Fendrick nodded wearily.

"Dead sure?"

"Yep. He's up there." The sheepman's hand swept toward the bluff.

"You're wounded."

"Got me in the shoulder. Nothing serious, I judge."

Cullison swung around. "Sure about that, Cass?" It was the first time for years that he had called the other by his first name except in irony.

"Sure."

"Let's have a look at the shoulder."

After he had done what he could for it Luck spoke bluffly. "This dashed feud is off, Cass. You've wiped the slate clean. When you killed Blackwell you put me out of a hostile camp."

"I'm glad—so glad. Now we'll all be friends, won't we?" Kate cried.

Cass looked at her and at Curly, both of them radiant with happiness, and his heart ached for what he had missed. But he smiled none the less.

"Suits me if it does you."

He gave one hand to Luck and the other to his daughter.

Curly laughed gaily. "Everybody satisfied, I reckon."

CHAPTER XXXI.
LOOSE THREADS.

CURLY was right when he said that those who knew about Sam's share in the planning of the Tin Cup hold-up would keep their mouths close. All of the men implicated in the robbery were dead except Dutch. Cullison used his influence to get the man a light sentence, for he knew that he was not a criminal at heart. In return Dutch went down the line without so much as breathing Sam's name.

Luck saw to it that Curly got all the credit of frustrating the outlaws in their attempt on the Flyer and of capturing them afterward. In the story of the rescue of Kate he played up Flandrau's part in the pursuit at the expense of the other riders. For September was at hand and the young man needed all the prestige he could get. The district attorney had no choice but to go on with the case of the State versus Flandrau on a charge of rustling horses from the Bar Double M. But public sentiment was almost a unit in favor of the defendant.

The evidence of the prosecution was not so strong as it had been. All of his accomplices were dead and one of the men implicated had given it out in his last moments that the young man was not a party to the crime. The man who had owned the feed corral had sold out and gone to Colorado. The hotel clerk would not swear positively that the prisoner was the man he had seen with the other rustlers.

Curly had one important asset no jury could forget. It counted for a good deal that Alec Flandrau, Billy MacKenzie and Luck Cullison were known to be backing him, but it was worth much more that his wife of a week sat beside him in the courtroom. Every time they looked at the prisoner the jurymen saw too her dusky, gallant little head and slender figure. They remembered the terrible experience thru which she had so recently passed. She had come thru it to happiness. Every look and motion of the girl wife radiated love for the young scamp who had won her. And since they were tender-hearted old frontiersmen they did not intend to spoil her joy. Moreover, society could afford to take chances with this young fellow Flandrau. He had been wild no doubt, but he had shown since the real stuff that was in him. Long before they left the box each member of the jury knew that he was going to vote for acquittal.

It took the jury only one ballot to find a verdict of not guilty. The judge did not attempt to stop the uproar of glad cheers that shook the building when the decision was read. He knew it was not the prisoner so much they were cheering as the brave girl who had sat so pluckily for three days beside the husband she had made a man.

From the courtroom Curly walked out under the blue sky of Arizona a free man. But he knew that the best of his good fortune was that he did not go alone. For all the rest of their lives her firm little steps would move beside him to keep him true and steady. He could not go wrong now, for he was anchored to a responsibility that was a continual joy and wonder to him.

The End.

* * *

What's In a Hat?

By Leslie Marden.

"MY HAT blew off my head and away today," said the man who had just come home to dinner. "The wind grabbed it as I rounded the corner of the Masonic Temple and it shot clear up to the tenth story, I guess."

"I'm glad of it," said his wife with enthusiastic lack of sympathy. "I've been trying for weeks to make you buy a new hat, but you always said that awful old thing was good enough. It was a fright and I was ashamed to be seen with it. It was disgraceful, Wilton, for a man in your position, going to expensive clubs and everything, to appear in headgear like that. Thank goodness, it's gone!"

"You are a shining star in an extravagant nation," declared her husband. "That old hat was perfectly good material and looked fine."

"It looked like a ragpicker's!" his wife contradicted. "Why, I've seen people look at that hat, Wilton, and I could almost tell what they were thinking—wondering why a man with as good a suit and overcoat as you had on had to wear such a wreck of a hat. The night we went to the theater and met the Ginghams on the train I thought I'd pass away—with Mr. Gingham and his $20 hat that she promptly told me about."

"Gingham may have paid twenty for his hat but it looked like no more than five to me," said her husband spiritedly. "I'm looking for him to land in the poorhouse with his flossy millinery. Thank heaven, I have sufficient strength of mind to resist your advice! I've got along all right with that old hat and earned a good living and not a soul has refused to speak to me so far."

"You owe something to your position in life," insisted his wife. "Only billionaires and the extremely poor can afford to go around looking threadbare. Why, suppose I wore shabby old things. In one week your credit would be ruined because all the women would tell their husbands that you must be failing in business. Let's see your new hat."

"I DON'T suppose you'll like it," said her husband reluctantly. "You never do like what I pick out for myself. However, here it is," he said, handing over the article for inspection. "It's rather conservative, but I can't go those velour velvet things the Willieboys wear. It's good stuff—isn't it?"

"Just fine!" said his wife, fingering the hat. "It's perfect nonsense saying we can't get as good wool material nowadays as before the war. And I like the coloring—I always did like a mixture, Wilton. That was what I hated most in the old hat—its dullness and frumpiness. Now this hat has some snap to it. And I think I like the shape—put it on."

Her husband obediently donned it and turned around sheepishly.

"Howja like it?"

"It looks perfectly fine on you," sighed his wife in relief. "If only you knew what a different looking man you are in this hat you'd blush with shame remembering your appearance in that old one. This gives you really a distinguished effect. It certainly is queer when a man's hat is so plain and everything that it can make such a difference."

"Well, I'm relieved that you like it," he said. "I certainly hate being nagged at about my neckties and shirts and dust on my coat and my hats. Now maybe you'll let me alone!"

"I'll be glad too," his wife told him soothingly. "If you'll always use as good judgment as this I'll not have a word to say. It's a nifty looking hat with style; just exactly what I wanted you to get. How much was it, by the way, and where did you buy it?"

Her husband coughed and edged toward the stairs. Safely there he grinned at her.

"That hat, Elmira," he said, "is just my old one that a boy rescued from the mud puddle into which it dropped—and I paid 75 cents to have it cleaned and a new band put on——"

"Wilton Abercrombie!" his wife gasped. "I'll never speak to you again as long as I live—never!"

FREE TO ALL WOMEN

Our MAGNOLIA BLOSSOM is a wonderful remedy for women who suffer from ailments peculiar to womanhood. Write us for a free trial package. Try it and it may do for you what it has for so many others. SOUTH BEND REMEDY CO., Box E, South Bend, Ind.

* * *

HEALS CHRONIC LEG SORES

Dr. H. J. Whittier, Suite 108, 1109 McGee Street, Kansas City, Mo., practicing in Kansas City since 1885, quickly heals leg sores and Varicose Ulcers without knife or pain. Our readers who are afflicted should write for free illust'd book. Adv.

* * *

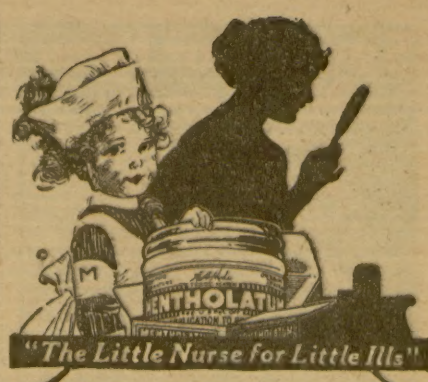
LEG SORES

The Bayles Distributing Co., 1858 Grand Ave., Kansas City, Mo., will mail Free Sample of ANTI-FLAMMA, a Soothing Anti-septic Poultice that draws out the poisons, stops the itching around sores and Heals While You Work. Write today describing case.—Adv.

* * *

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years, and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa. —Adv.



"The Little Nurse for Little Ills"

Jane's nose was sunburned

SHE was mad—there was a dance the next night and she was going with John. Mother suggested

A HEALING CREAM **Mentholatum**

Always made under this signature

It did the trick overnight—cooled the burn, stopped the pain, gently healed the cracked skin. She went to the dance happily.

John never knew about it

Mentholatum is good for the sting of insect bites, too—and for cuts, burns, etc.

Mentholatum is sold everywhere in tubes, 25c.; jars, 25c, 50c, $1.

The Mentholatum Co.
Buffalo, N. Y.
Wichita, Kans. Bridgeburg, Ont.

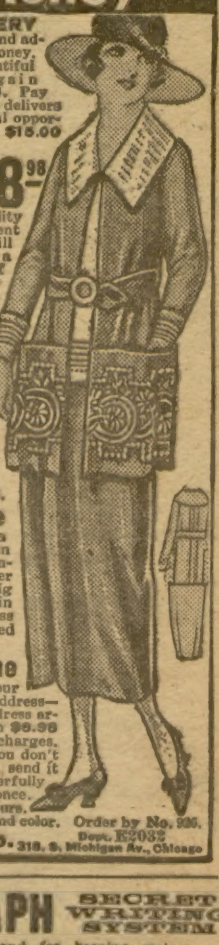
Send Your Name No Money

FREE DELIVERY

Just send your name and address. Don't send money. We will send this beautiful price-smashing bargain dress to you, prepaid. Pay the postman when he delivers it. This is a wonderful opportunity of getting a $15.00 dress for $8.98.

Embroidered Summer Dress $8.98

Made of a fine quality Ramie Linene of excellent wearing quality. Will wash perfectly. Has a collar and vest effect of white pique. Loose belt, set off with ornamental buckle. Serviceable pockets, forming bottom of jacket effect, which is handsomely embroidered in white thread. This is a one-piece dress which opens down the front. Back and cuffs are prettily tucked. Colors: rose, blue, nile green or tan. Sizes to fit misses 14, 16, 18. Ladies 32 to 44.



Prize Style

This is a copy of a prize-winning Parisian importation. It is a beautiful new stylish summer dress at a great big money-saving bargain price. Wear this dress and be the best dressed woman in your town.

Don't Send One Penny Just send your name and address—no money. When the dress arrives, pay the postman $8.98 only. We pay delivery charges. Wear the dress. If you don't find it all you expect, send it back and we will cheerfully refund your money at once. This is our risk, not yours. Be sure and give size and color. Order by No. 936.

Walter Field Co. 318 S. Michigan Av., Chicago. Dept. E2032

WETO GRAPH SECRET WRITING SYSTEM

Invaluable for lovers and for keeping recipes, addresses, secret memorandum or other information safe and private. No stranger can read your postals if you use the Weto Graph. Great fun for lovers or friends. Don't miss it. Send 10c and we will send the Weto Graph by mail, with full instructions. Address

PENN PUBLISHING CO., Blairsville, Pa

Send Your Name No Money

Don't Send One Penny! Just send your name and address and give sizes—send no money. I will ship this embroidered voile waist, linene skirt and muslin petticoat to you on approval. The waist and skirt are worth the price alone, so you are getting the petticoat absolutely free. Order at our risk; if the outfit does not please you, return it at our expense. The trial will cost you nothing.

White 3 Piece Outfit $3.98

You will save $1.50 by ordering this whole outfit now. Guaranteed to wash perfectly and give excellent wear.

The waist is made of fine sheer voile, prettily embroidered. **White only.** Sizes 32 to 44. The skirt is made of a heavy ramie linene crash. Two stylish pockets and loose belt. Cut full and roomy. Color, white only. Sizes 22 to 34 waist measure, 36 to 42 length. The petticoat is made of muslin with an embroidered flounce.

Send just your name and address—no money. Pay the postman $3.98 only when he brings the 3-piece outfit. We pay transportation charges. This is a get-acquainted bargain—don't miss it. If for any reason you are not pleased, return the outfit and we will refund your money. This is our risk, not yours. Be sure and give sizes. Order by No. 480.

Walter Field Co. Dept. L3032 316 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago

The Bargain Mail Order House

FREE Watch, Charm & Chain

Guaranteed time keeper, has beautiful gold finished hands and dial, and gold finished chain & charm—sells retail at $7.50. This—or ladies watch—given absolutely FREE to those who sell 10 pairs of our high grade durable shoes. Write today for our **Big Catalog of Shoe Bargains** for every member of the family. Get busy—and secure this fine watch FREE.

UNITED STORES CO., Box 542, Lancaster, Pa.

Free To Pile Sufferers

Don't Be Cut—Until You Try This New Home Cure That Anyone Can Use Without Discomfort or Loss of Time. Simply Chew up a Pleasant Tasting Tablet Occasionally and Rid Yourself of Piles.

Let Me Prove This Free.

My internal method for the treatment and permanent relief of piles is the correct one. Thousands upon thousands of grateful letters testify to this, and I want you to try this method at my expense.

No matter whether your case is of long standing or recent development, whether it is chronic or acute, whether it is occasional or permanent, you should send for this free trial treatment.

No matter where you live, no matter what your age or occupation, if you are troubled with piles, my method will relieve you promptly.

I especially want to send it to those apparently hopeless cases where all forms of ointments, salves, and other local applications have failed.

I want you to realize that my method of treating piles is the one most dependable treatment.

This liberal offer of free treatment is too important for you to neglect a single day. Write now. Send no money. Simply mail the coupon, but do this now, TODAY.

Free Pile Remedy

E. R. Page,
382 G Page Bldg., Marshall, Mich.
Please send free trial of your method to:

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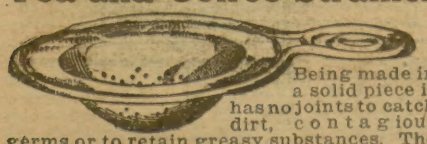
.....

.....

The Sanitary Aluminum Tea and Coffee Strainer



Being made in a solid piece it has no joints to catch dirt, contagious germs or to retain greasy substances. The metal of which it is constructed prohibits rust, and although far lighter, it will outlast the best wire strainer. Price 25 cents.

W. C. WATKINS, Parnassus, Pa.

Hot Off the Jokesmith's Anvil

Brain Teasers.

Feminine Name Deletions.

316—1. Take a letter from a girl's name, transpose, and find a sort of wood.
2. Take a letter from a girl's name and find a girl's name.
3. Take a letter from a girl's name and find an animal.
4. Take a letter from a girl's name, transpose, and find rational.
5. Take a letter from a girl's name and find a place to sleep.
6. Take a letter from a girl's name, transpose, and find to conceal.
7. Take a letter from a girl's name, transpose, and find a fruit.
8. Take a letter from a girl's name, transpose, and find reckless.

Charade.

317—My first is a circle or a ring or an exclamation. My second is anything that breathes, also an organ in animals. My whole is a man's name.

The Concealed Orchestra.

318—A letter taken from each word will reveal in each sentence a musical instrument.
1. Housekeeping requires experience these days, Dora.
2. Great singers, undoubtedly, must protect their throats.
3. Florence, will you telephone Edna?
4. Traveling in foreign lands aids education.
5. These grapes are splendid.
6. Alfred disappeared after dinner.

Four-word Square.

319—1. A frolic.
2. A period of immense duration.
3. A flower.
4. A joint of the body.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES.

312. Geographical Double Acrostic.

N—es—T
E—ri—E
W—ai—N
J—oh—N
E—as—E
R—ow—S
S—in—S
E—ri—E
Y—al—E

313. Synonyms.

1. Hemp, hem; jute, jut; flax, lax.
2. Brook, rook; creek, reek; river, rive.
3. Chair, hair; stool, tool; seat, sea.
4. Think, thin; will, ill; dream, ream.

314. Double Acrostic.

P atc H
R owd Y
I ndi A
M odo C
R abb I
O cea N
S cen T
E art H

315. Transposed State Capitals.

1. Olympia, Wash. 2. Madison, Wis. 3. Montgomery, Ala. 4. Montpelier, Vt. 5. Providence, R. I. 6. Salem, Oregon. 7. Annapolis, Md. 8. Charleston, W. Va. 9. Dover, Delaware. 10. Denver, Col. 11. Jackson, Miss. 12. Pierre, S. D.

It is not desired that readers send in the answers to the puzzles. They are printed simply as brain teasers, and the correct answers will be printed the following week.

Louder Than a Call.

"It's too bad, parson, that you've got to wear out your life in this measly little burg for a thousand a year!"

"Oh, hadn't you heard? I have a call from a larger parish for two thousand!"

"That ain't a call, parson, that's a raise."

Cunning Strategy.

Lady of the House—"I thought I heard you sawing wood for the last two hours and I see you haven't touched a stick."

Gentleman of the Road—"No, lady, I always snore like that when I sleep in a woodshed. It insures me against being disturbed."

Then His Honor Snorted!

In an Irish courthouse an old man was called into the witness box, and, being confused and somewhat near-sighted he went up the stairs that led to the bench instead of those that led to the box. The judge good-humoredly said:

"Is it a judge you want to be, my good man?"

"Ah, sure, yer worship," was the reply. "I'm an old man now, and mebbe it's all I'm fit for."

Companionship Barred.

"Rastus, if you want to prosper in this world you must go to bed with the chickens."

"Yassir, I'se willin' to go to bed wif 'em, but de folks dat owns chickens ain' sufficiently trustful."

Applying It.

"No lesson you learn in the classroom is of much use unless you apply it in everyday life," said a school superintendent addressing an incoming high school class.

"Don't just learn that two and two make four for recitation purposes, but apply that knowledge whenever the occasion requires. Like the lad who was studying industrial economy:

"Isn't it romantic sitting out here by the mellow light of the moon?" murmured the girl.

"Yes," he answered, "and besides, your father can't kick about his electric light bill."

Similar Symptoms.

"The revival has been going on for a week down our way," said a pious resident of the Fiddle Creek neighborhood. "Aw, lemme tell you, Gap, you don't know what it is to have a powerful evangelist in your midst."

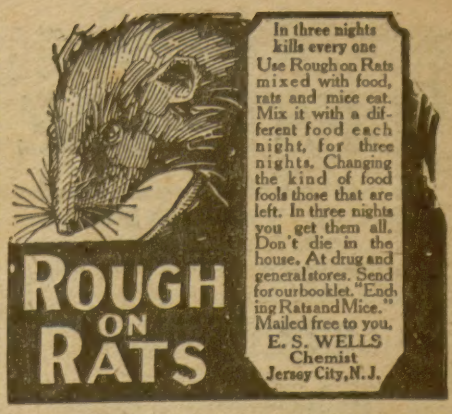
"No, but I can sorter guess at it," replied Gag Johnson of Gumpus Ridge, Ark. "I swallowed a tollable big dose of horse liniment tuther night by mistake for a little something refreshing that I had hid in the cubboard."—Judge.

Complimentary.

The new superintendent of a lunatic asylum was strolling round the grounds a few weeks after his appointment, when one of the inmates came up to him and, raising his hat, exclaimed: "We all like you better than the last one, sir."

"Thank you," said the new official, quite touched. "And may I ask why?"

"Well, sir," replied the lunatic, "you see, you are more like one of us!"



In three nights kills every one. Use Rough on Rats mixed with food, rats and mice eat. Mix it with a different food each night, for three nights. Changing the kind of food fools those that are left. In three nights you get them all. Don't die in the house. At drug and general stores. Send for our booklet, "Ending Rats and Mice." Mailed free to you.

E. S. WELLS
Chemist
Jersey City, N. J.

Weak Bladder

To introduce a wonderful new European Healing Discovery, PROGLANDIN, we will send 50,000 Boxes on FREE TRIAL to men and women anywhere. For Kidneys and Bladder. Quickly soothes and heals Bladder Weakness and Irritation. Producing wonderful results in long suffering cases where ordinary treatments absolutely fail. Send no money, but just your address and get all by return mail for your own use; also "New Science" Book on Self Care, Free.

50c. Box Free

S. T. WORTH, 74 Cortlandt St., New York

Free Book on PATENTS

Contains valuable information and advice to inventors on securing Patents. Send model or sketch of your invention for Free Opinion of its patentable nature. Prompt service, 20 years experience. Write today.

TALBERT & TALBERT 468-4 TALBERT BLDG., Washington, D.C.

Goitre Pay When Well

I have an honest, proven remedy for goitre (big neck). It checks the growth at once reduces the enlargement, stops pain and distress and relieves in a little while. Pay when well. Tell your friends about this. Write me at once. **DR. ROCK.**
Dept. L, Box 737, Milwaukee, Wis.

ASTHMA RECIPE

I will gladly send FREE to any sufferer a simple HERB RECIPE for Asthma and Bronchitis. Most stubborn cases quickly relieved.

A. O. MEIER
Box 655, Dept. B. Milwaukee, Wis.

Why Housework Is Not A Drudgery To The Woman With Iron In Her Blood—

Physician Tells How

NUXATED IRON HELPS GIVE WOMEN RENEWED HEALTH, VIM and VITALITY

With Strong Nerves and Keen Energy To Meet The Cares Of Daily Home Life.

Let Iron In the Blood Lift You To Health and Strength

With her former strength and energy failing and ill-health gradually creeping upon her, many a woman finds her interest and enthusiasm in the common details of her home gone, and housework nothing but endless drudgery. That there are thousands of such women who allow themselves to remain weak, run-down and nervous, over-burdened with the cares and responsibilities of the daily home life, simply because they do not know how to renew their waning strength, is the opinion of Dr. Ferdinand King, New York Physician and Medical Author. "Unless such women," he continued, "take some steps to get more health-giving iron into their blood, they are bound to look pale, haggard and worn and show signs of age at a time when they should be young in feeling and attractive in appearance.

"You cannot expect pale, weak blood lacking in iron to make strong, healthy, beautiful women. It is red blood—rich in iron—that gives energy and endurance to perform household work with ease. If you are wearied by the activities of your daily life, if you have lost the spring of your step, if your skin is pale and sickly-looking, and your enthusiasm for work and pleasure is waning, it is more than likely that the iron in your blood is thinning out. Almost invariably in these cases I prescribe organic iron—Nuxated Iron—to enrich the blood and create thousands of new red blood cells, thereby quickly transforming the flabby, toneless flesh into firm healthy tissue. I have known Nuxated Iron to give women greatly increased strength and energy in two weeks' time and make them look years younger."

Dr. Kenneth K. MacAlpine, a prominent New York Surgeon, member of the New York State Medical Society and for 16 years Adjunct Professor of the New York Post Graduate Medical School and Hospital, says: "You can tell the women whose blood is rich in strength-giving iron—they are the beautiful, rosy-cheeked ones, radiant with life, vim and energy—envied and sought after wherever they go. In my opinion there is nothing better than organic iron—Nuxated Iron—to help make healthy, full-blooded women."

Manufacturers' Note: Nuxated Iron, which is recommended above is not a secret remedy but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products it is easily assimilated and does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach. Each tablet of genuine Nuxated Iron is stamped as follows and the words Nuxated Iron are stamped into each bottle, so that the public may not be led into accepting inferior substitutes. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

A Little Matter of Concentration

"I KNOW that I'll never learn to play this game," said the girl with the brassie raised to drive.

"It's really simple when you get the swing of it," her enthusiastic companion replied. "Practice makes perfect."

"But George, you know that I'm not good at sports and if I were to practice for fifty years I'd never be able to hit a ball."

"That's all very well, Gracie, but please stop talking now and put your mind on the game. You must concentrate if you want to make a good drive."

"George, if concentrating would do any good my ball would travel from here to Cuba and back."

"Well, come on now and hit it. Hit it, Gracie, for heaven's sake! There is a foursome nearly upon us."

"What? Oh, George, I do believe it's Milly and Jack Truesdale with some friends of theirs. You remember Milly and Jack, don't you, Georgie? They're the ones who eloped and went to Europe on their honeymoon. I do wonder if she got the dress she is wearing in Paris. Oh, what did you say, Georgie? That you want me to drive. Well, I do wish you wouldn't hurry me so.

"Now then, George, here I go. One—two—three. George, where did that ball go? It must have gone up on the green. I don't see it near here."

"It's teed up just where you put it, dear. Your swing went a little wild, that's all."

"Oh, George, how funny! Let me put a little powder on my nose before those people come up on us."

"Gracie, will you kindly shoot!"

"Now—Mmmm—Why Georgie look at that ball. It's sailing like a bird thru the air! Oh, it's really on the green!"

George got a fairly good drive and they started down the course after the balls.

It was his turn to putt, and his ball was farthest away from the holes. And he missed.

The girl took her putter from the bag and planted herself over the ball with clinched teeth.

"I know I'm going to miss it," she said. "I know I'm going to miss it."

"Say you're going to hit it!" the man commanded her sternly.

The girl was startled at his loss of temper. She jumped, her club hitting the ball. The ball rolled into the hole.

"Gad, Grace," said the man, "you've made bogey, counting in your foozle!"

She looked at him and smiled sweetly: "And why shouldn't I, Georgie, dear? Didn't I concentrate?"

CLASSIFIED WANT ADS

Information—The rate for one insertion in The Saturday Blade and one insertion in the Chicago Ledger is 35 cents a word, minimum 14 words, less 3% for cash. Each initial and group of figures is counted as a word, and the name and address are also counted. This is the minimum rate; neither more nor less is charged, irrespective of size or number of insertions. An ad may appear in both publications of the same week, or in the Blade of one week and the Ledger of the next.

W. D. BOYCE CO., Publisher, 500-514 N. Dearborn St., CHICAGO.

AGENTS WANTED

AGENTS—BEST SELLER; JEM RUBBER Repair for tires and tubes; supersedes vulcanization at a saving of over 800 per cent.; put it on cold, it vulcanizes itself in two minutes, and is guaranteed to last the life of the tire or tube; sells to every auto owner and accessory dealer. For particulars how to make big money and free sample, address Amazon Rubber Co., Philadelphia, Pa., Dept. 704.

WATER STILLS, MADE ENTIRELY OF heavy copper, one and three gallon capacity, prices $25.00 and $40.00 respectively. Shipped prepaid by express or parcel post the same day we receive your order. Ideal for distilling water for automobile batteries, industrial uses, and drinking purposes. Boyer & Co., Dept. M 519, Farnam Bldg., Omaha, Nebraska.

A BIG, QUICK, INCOME SELLING REmarkable household necessity; every woman wants from one to six dozen; immense profit possibilities; every home a prospect; nothing like it on the market; easy to demonstrate, easy to use, easy to sell. Sample free. Send 5c for postage. Sunrise Sales Co., 341A Fifth Ave., New York.

AGENTS: A BRAND NEW HOSIERY PROPosition for men, women and children. Must wear 12 months or replaced free. All styles, colors and fancy stripes. You can sell at less than store prices. Every home a prospect. Write for samples. Thomas Hosiery Co., 3311 North St., Dayton, Ohio.

AGENTS—TO TRAVEL BY AUTOMOBILE introducing our big line of fast summer sellers. The greatest line on earth. Make $10 a day easy. Complete outfit and automobile furnished to workers. Write at once for exclusive territory. American Products Co., 2452 American Bldg., Cincinnati, O.

TIRE AGENTS, EXCLUSIVE REPRESENtatives to use and sell the new Mellinger Extra-Ply Tires. (No seconds.) Guarantee bond 8000 miles. Wholesale prices. Sample sections furnished. Mellinger Tire Co., 972 Oak, Kansas City, Missouri.

EARN EASILY $10 DAILY AND MORE DIStributing established line summer drinks, foods, flavoring extracts, soaps, toilet preparations. Write for complete "Wonder Outfit." Crofts & Reed, 424 Clairmont Ave., Chicago.

SELL FLARE-FIRE SPARK PLUGS, CONE Cap protects against heat, carbon, dirt. Agents wanted; quick sales; large profits; details free. International Auto. Equip. Co., Dept. 14, Sta. F., Cincinnati, Ohio.

AGENTS—LARGE MANUFACTURER WANTS agents to sell hosiery, underwear, shirts, dresses, skirts, waists, shoes, clothing, etc. Write for free samples. Madison Mills, 503 Broadway, New York.

SELL INSYDE TYRES, GENUINE INNER armor for auto tires; double mileage; prevents punctures and blowouts; tremendous demand. American Accessories Company, Dept. 126, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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3901 Michigan Ave., Dept. 390, Chicago, Ill.

THIN ICE

(Continued From Page 14)

hour of need. With a gloomy, dissatisfied brow he looked afar into the distant valley, and darkness came rapidly with the wane of the sun.

Suddenly, in the midst of his reverie, an exciting sound reached his ears. He listened. The tread of a horse was distinctly audible. More than that—he knew from it that the rider was climbing the trail which led to his cabin. He seized his rifle and stood alert. His ears were strained and tensely listening. He was not mistaken. There was but one horse and so but one man.

The hoofbeats grew clearer. He knew from the sound that the horse was being urged. An instant later it arose over the brow of the hill and the rider came into view—a slim, trim built figure. The next instant the horse was sent towards him with a mad gallop. He raised the hammer, sighted the gun, then with a cry of horror he dropped it and reeled under the shock of recognition.

The rider sprang from the horse and ran towards him. It was Nancy dressed in boy's garb. Unheeding, or perhaps not noticing his agitation she threw her arms about his neck with a sob of joy and relief.

"Quick," she cried, "they are coming."

In some unaccountable way his love had come back to him free and courageous. He kissed her, then disengaging her arms he looked quickly about him.

"Who is coming?" he asked.

"The sheriff and a mob. Some of them are going to ride around to try and head you off. Father has gone into the camp to send two of the men around into the valley."

For a moment he stood silent, intensely thoughtful. The roan she had ridden moved over by the black. They rubbed noses, and Fox from the edge of the hill came bounding towards them with barks of alarm.

"And you," he asked her—"what are you going to do?" He stepped back a pace and looked at her. She blushed, as he could faintly see in the darkness, then with a shy laugh that was wholly bewitching she sidled close to him and took his arm.

"I am going with you, of course," she said. "This"—she kicked out one foot—"this is a suit that I wore at a school theatrical. I put it on because—well because we are running away. Father struck me, and so——"

"So you come to me. Not for love but because you were driven out."

Instantly her arms were about him. "No, no. For love! For love of you. Listen! It was because of you that he struck me. Because I defended you."

"I knew it," he cried. "I knew that you would come, and I am satisfied."

Holding her tightly to him they stood a moment in silence, unmindful of the faithful dog circling about them with barks of warning and distress. With dulled ears and love-ladened senses they might have lingered too long but for Fox. Good dog that he was, he had seen the flickering lights gleaming along the trail and he sensed, in the dog's true way, the coming of danger. He nagged at Dr. Hallam's legs until he released Nancy and turned to listen to the distant sound of men afoot in the hills. Dr. Hallam went to the edge of the hill and he, too, saw the danger lights.

"They are coming," he cried, hastening back to Nancy. "We have not a moment to lose. Gather the horses. I will be back in a moment."

Dashing into the cabin he seized a five gallon can of kerosene and emptied it upon the floor. He rolled a paper into a torch and then went to assist her to mount.

"Let me help you," he said.

Lightly she sprang into the saddle with the grace of an agile, daring boy. "Help yourself," she said; and he turned from her with a laugh of pride. He got astride his own horse and riding to the door of the cabin he lit the torch and threw it inside. An explosion followed. It was succeeded by a flare. As the red glow of the burning cabin cast its spectacular light upon the posse which had come too late, the black and the roan, the male and his mate cleared the hogback and dashed over the trail that led to the Wind River range of the mountains.

* * * * * * * *

Two years later Nancy, with a soft, tender light in her eyes, sat watching her husband at work at his desk at home. He finished the letter he was writing, folded a draft within it, and sealed the envelope. "There," he said, turning to her with a smile, "that is the last. It is all paid back, principal and interest. We are clean. Aren't you glad?"

She got up and kissed him. "You never were unclean," she whispered. "You were just a little smudged on the outside. And dear, I love you because love has redeemed you."

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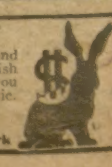

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